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1 Right understanding of the path

1.1 CONTEXTS OF THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

1.1.1 The 7 sets

1.1.1.1 In terms of teachings, the whole of early Buddhism is traditionally summarized as the following **7 sets** of teachings, which total up as the 37 awakening-factors (*bodhi, pakkhiya dhamma*):¹

(1) The 4 focuses of mindfulness	<i>catu satipaṭṭhāna</i>
(2) The 4 right strivings	<i>catu samma-p, padhāna</i>
(3) The 4 bases of spiritual success	<i>catu iddhi, pāda</i>
(4) The 5 spiritual faculties	<i>pañc'indriya</i>
(5) The 5 spiritual powers	<i>pañca bala</i>
(6) The 7 awakening-factors	<i>satta bojjaṅga</i>
(7) The noble eightfold path	<i>ariya aṭṭh'aṅgika magga</i> [1.5.1.1]

1.1.1.2 The noble eightfold path is the 7th and last of the sets. It is the most often quoted of the 7 sets, which attests to its significance. Unlike these 7 sets, it is often simply listed without any elaboration and stands in its own right, thus:

It is **this very noble eightfold path**,² that is to say,

(1) right view,	<i>sammā diṭṭhi</i>	
(2) right thought [right intention],	<i>sammā saṅkappa</i>	
(3) right speech,	<i>sammā vācā</i>	
(4) right action,	<i>sammā kammantā</i>	
(5) right livelihood,	<i>sammā ājīva</i>	
(6) right effort,	<i>sammā vāyāma</i>	
(7) right mindfulness,	<i>sammā sati</i>	
(8) right concentration.	<i>sammā samādhi</i>	(S 56.11), SD 1.1 ³

1.1.1.3 The term “right” is *sammā* in Pali, is cognate with Sanskrit *samy-āñc* (mfn), the nominative form is *samyāñ*.⁴ It has the literal sense of “connected, in one,” and as such means “(adj) entire, whole, complete, all; correct, proper, accurate, true, right; (adv) thoroughly, properly, rightly, in the way it ought to, perfectly”; opposite, *micchā*, “wrong.” The Latin cognate is *summa* (feminine of *summus*), “highest, topmost” (found in English, eg, as “sum, summary, summit”); akin to *super*, “over,” eg, “supermundane.”

It has two main senses, that is, *samīcī* (f) (“praise; politeness, decency, civility”) and *samyak* or *samyag* (“right, full, perfect”).⁵ It is related to *sāmīci* (adj), “right, proper,” as *sāmīci, paṭipanna*, “of right; proper] conduct.”⁶ Before double consonants, it is shortened to *samma-*, as in *samma-p, padhāna*, “right striving.”⁷ Before a vowel, it takes a euphonic infix, such as before *akkhāta*, “taught,” becoming *samma-d-akkhāta*, “well-taught” (Dh 86), or before *eva* (an emphatic particle), becoming *samma-d-eva* (D 1:110; V1:9).

¹ On the 7 sets, see SD 10.1. These sets are mentioned in: **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,10,2+3), SD 9 & Intro to **Mahā Sakul'udāyī S** (M 77,15-21/2:11 f), SD 6.18 Intro, full tr SD 49.5. The latter Sutta (M 77) lists the 7 sets. See also Vism 22.32-43/678-681; UA 129.

² For a def and details of the 8 limbs that is the eightfold path, see **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141,23-31/3:250-252), SD 11.11; **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,21/2:311-313), SD 13.2; also **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117/3:71-78), SD 6.10. See also Gethin 2001:190-226 (ch 6) for an insightful study.

³ According to Gethin, the *ariya aṭṭh'aṅgika magga* is cited 38 times; he gives other technical details, 2001: 163. For further refs, see Lamotte, *Traité* III:1129.

⁴ SED 1181cd sv *samyak & samy-āñc*, “entire, whole, complete, all; correct, proper, accurate, true, right.” PED 655d, sv *sam-* equates *sammā* with Skt *samyak*, “towards one point.” Cf Gruber, who comments on the inappropriateness of translating *sammā* as “right” (1999:190), qu by Analayo 2003:74.

⁵ See SED sv *samy-āñc*. See BHSD sv *samyak* (1).

⁶ D 2:104; S 1:220; A 2:56, 4:310: see SD 15.10a (4).

⁷ See SD 10.2.

1.1.1.4 The factors or limbs (*aṅga*) of the path are often listed apart from the eightfold path itself. In this connection, the “right” (*sammā*) [1.1.1.3] factors are contrasted with the “wrong” counterparts. The right path is the eightfold path with two final additional factors—right knowledge (*sammā,ñāṇa*) and right freedom (*sammā,vimutti*). This set of 10 factors is called the tenfold “rightness” (*sammatta*). [1.2.2]

1.1.2 Components of the 8 path-factors

1.1.2.1 A straightforward “analysis” (*vibhaṅga*) of the eightfold path is found in several places in the Nikāyas, such as **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141), **the (Magga) Vibhaṅga Sutta** (S 45.8), **the Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 104 f, 235 f) and **the Paṭisambhidā,magga** (Pm 1:40-42).⁸ The components of every path-factor are listed in **Table 1** below. It is immediately obvious that these path-factor components are recurring themes in the suttas, like the other 6 of the 7 sets [1.1.1.1]. However, it is also clear that the scope of the eightfold path itself is much wider than any of these 6 sets,

right view	<i>samma diṭṭhi</i>	directly seeing the 4 truths	}	wisdom (<i>paññā</i>)
right intention	<i>sammā saṅkappa</i>	charity lovingkindness compassion		
right speech	<i>sammā vācā</i>	refraining from false speech refraining from divisive speech refraining from harsh (hurting) speech refraining from frivolous talk	}	moral conduct (<i>sīla</i>)
right action	<i>sammā kammantā</i>	refraining from taking life refraining from taking the not-given refraining from sexual misconduct refraining from wrong speech & wrong action		
right livelihood	<i>sammā ājīva</i>		}	mental concentration (<i>samādhi</i>)
right effort	<i>sammā vāyāma</i>	preventing unarisen unwholesome states abandoning arisen unwholesome states cultivating unarisen wholesome states maintaining arisen wholesome states		
right mindfulness	<i>sammā sati</i>	contemplation of the body contemplation of feeling contemplation of the mind contemplation of dharmas	}	
right concentration	<i>sammā samādhi</i>	cultivating the 4 dhyanas		

Table 1. The eightfold path and its limbs

1.1.2.2 The eightfold path [Table 1] is divided into the 3 trainings [1.5] or aggregates [1.6]—those of moral virtue, of mental concentration and of wisdom. But here, as a list, the wisdom aggregate appears first. Either way—whether as the 3 trainings sequence or the set sequence here—the eightfold path is clearly a self-contained set, more so than any other in the 7 sets.

1.1.3 The best of paths

1.1.3.1 The eightfold path is the best of paths (*maggā'naṭṭh'aṅgiko seṭṭho*) to awakening (Dh 273a); it is the only way, no other, to nirvana (Dh 274a). The Buddha declares that it is “the foremost

⁸ Respectively (except for Vbh & Pm): **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,21/2:311), SD 13.2; **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141,23-31/3:251) SD 11.11; **(Magga) Vibhaṅga S** (S 45.8/5:8-10), SD 14.5. Lamotte, however, says there is no exact equivalent of these in the Chinese Āgamas (*Traité* III: 1130).

of conditioned states”⁹ [11.3.2.4], the best thing in our unawakened lives—because it brings awakening. Hence, it is said, for example, in **the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11) that the noble eightfold path is “to be cultivated (*bhāvetabba*)”¹⁰ [1.2.3]. After all, this is what brings awakening to the Buddha himself and to all the arhats who have come after him.

1.1.3.2 The Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta (M 117) explains why right view comes first. It is the key factor that underlies all the others. Right view makes a path-factor “right” (*sammā*). Right view, then, runs through each and every one of the path-factors.¹¹ Basically, right view first arises whenever we clear away *wrong views*. When this is properly and habitually done, *right views* are established. As these right views become more established, our mind becomes more unified in the way we view reality and think or feel about the world.

Notice that, as a path-factor, **right view** (*sammā ditṭhi*) is singular. More often, we have right views (plural), which are defined in **the Apaṇṇaka Sutta** (M 60) and **the Kara.ja,kāya Brahma,vihāra Sutta** (A 10.208), thus:

“There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed.

There is fruit and result of good and bad actions [karma].

There is this world, the next world.

There are mother and father, spontaneously born beings.

There are brahmins and recluses who, living rightly and practising rightly, proclaim this world and the next after having directly known and realized it for themselves.”

(M 60,6), SD 35.5, = (A 10.208,1.8), SD 40a,1 (5.1.3)

1.1.3.3 In the mundane path, we work to identify wrong views, abandon them, and replace them with the respective right views. In the supramundane path, we have a better understanding of these views and how our mind works, so that we gradually give up even these right views. At the end of the process, as an arhat, we have no need of any views, which are merely partial and, often incorrect, views of things. The supramundane right view, on the other hand, is that of seeing directly into true reality, of the vision of things as they really are.

1.1.3.4 The following suttas give a canonical definition of the 8 factors or limbs of the eightfold path, with the highlights of its important aspects:

Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta	D 22,21	the 8 path-factors are defined	SD 13.2
Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta	M 141,23-31	the 8 path-factors are defined	SD 11.11
Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta	M 117	why right view is foremost	SD 6.10
(Kalyāṇa,mitta) Appamāda S	S 3.18	spiritual friendship is the whole path	SD 34.3
(Magga) Vibhaṅga Sutta	S 45.8	the 8 path-factors are defined	SD 14.5
Accharā,saṅghāṭa Vagga 2	A 1.18.46-53	the path-factors cultivated individually	[below]
Titth’āyatana Sutta	A 3.61/1:177	the 4 th noble truth as the path	SD 6.8
(Tika) Bhaya Sutta	A 3.62/1:179	the ending of decay, disease, death	SD 94.10
(Tika) Channa Sutta	A 3.71/1:217	the abandoning of the 3 roots	SD 94.11
Ariya Magga Sutta	A 4.237/2:236	the karma leading to the end of karma	SD 98.18
Nibbedhika Pariyāya Sutta	A 6.63/3:411	the cessation of sensual pleasures	} SD 6.11
	(A 3:412)	the cessation of feelings	
	(A 3:413)	the cessation of perceptions	
	(A 4:414)	the cessation of the influxes	
	(A 4:415)	the cessation of karma	
	(A 3:416)	the cessation of suffering	
Go,pāla Sutta	A 11.17/5:352	the cowherd “who knows the road”	
Rāga Peyyāla	A 8.118/4:348	the 8 things to be developed	

⁹ The eightfold path, being the foremost of conditioned states to be cultivated: see **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,12), SD 1.1. See DEB: saṅkhārā (1.9).

¹⁰ **Dhamma,cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,12) + SD 1.1 (6.2.2.1).

¹¹ M 117,34-35 (SD 6.10).

1.1.3.5 The **Eka Nipāta** (Book of Ones) of the Aṅguttara lists the path-factors individually, stating that they are each to be cultivated by itself, as presented in this set of suttas:

SD 10.16(1-8)

Ariya Aṭṭha Magg’āṅga Suttā*

The Discourses on the Noble Eight Path-factors | **A 1.18.39-46** (A:B 1.431-438)

Be: A 1.18.38-45 = Aṅguttara Nikāya 1, Eka Nipāta 18, Aparā Accharā,saṅghāta Vagga 38-45¹²

A 1.18.39 Ekaka Sammā,ditthi Sutta, The Discourse on Right View

(1) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right view**, this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell not vainly in meditation. He who is a doer of the Teacher’s teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country’s almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

*Accharā,saṅghāta,mattam pi ce bhikkhave bhikkhu sammā,ditthim¹³bhāveti
ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bhikkhu
aritta-j,jhāno viharati
satthu,sāsana,karo
ovāda,patikaro
amoghaṃ raṭṭha,piṇḍaṃ bhujjati.
Ko pana vādo ye naṃ bahulī,karonti.*

A 1.18.40 Ekaka Sammā,saṅkappa Sutta, The Discourse on Right Thought [Intention]

(2) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right thought** [right intention], this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell not vainly in meditation. He is a doer of the Teacher’s teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country’s almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

A 1.18.41 Ekaka Sammā,vācā Sutta, The Discourse on Right Speech

(3) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right speech**, this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell not vainly in meditation. He is a doer of the Teacher’s teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country’s almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

A 1.18.42 Ekaka Sammā,kammantā Sutta, The Discourse on Right Action

(4) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right action**, this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell not vainly in meditation. He is a doer of the Teacher’s teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country’s almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

A 1.18.43 Ekaka Sammā,ājīva Sutta, The Discourse on Right Livelihood

(5) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right livelihood**, this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell not vainly in meditation. He is a doer of the Teacher’s teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country’s almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

A 1.18.44 Ekaka Sammā,vāyāma Sutta, The Discourse on Right Effort

(6) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right effort**, this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell not vainly in meditation. He is a doer of the Teacher’s teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country’s almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

¹² Ee treats this set of “suttas” as a section 39 of Vagga XX (A 1.20.39/1:40,5-10). Ce takes it to be part of the 6th section of Vagga XVI, titling it, **Accharā,saṅghāta Vaggo**, “the finger-snap chapter” (hence, A 1.16.6.38-45 @ BJT 1:83, given in full). Be numbers it as Vagga XVIII, **Aparā Accharā,saṅghāta Vagga**, “Another finger-snap chapter” = Finger-snap Ch 2 (Be 15:42), with Vagga V as Finger-snap Ch 1. Se gives the text in an undifferentiated chunk, following **Pasādakara,dhamm’ādi,pāli**, “the text on qualities inspiring faith.” I follow the Ee numbering (which is one number more than Be), and Ce text (which is helpfully laid out in full). For further referencing, see A:B 1618 n192.

¹³ These passages are cycles (*peyyāla*), which repeat throughout. For each new passage or sutta that follows, replace with the Pali term for the path-factor (underscored) respectively with: *sammā,saṅkappam* | *sammā,vācam* | *sammā,kammantam* | *sammā,ājīvam* | *sammā,vāyāmam* | *sammā,satim* | *sammā,samādhim*.

A 1.18.45 Ekaka Sammā,sati Sutta, The Discourse on Right Mindfulness

(7) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right mindfulness**, this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell vainly in meditation. He is a doer of the Teacher's teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country's almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

A 1.18.46 (Ekaka) Sammā,samādhi Sutta, The Discourse on Right Concentration

(8) Bhikshus, if, for just the time of a finger-snap, a monk cultivates **right concentration**, this monk, bhikshus, is said to dwell not vainly in meditation. He is a doer of the Teacher's teaching, who keeps to his advice—he eats not the country's almsfood in vain. What more to speak of those who develop it?

— evaṃ —

1.1.3.6 Although the eightfold path is conditioned [1.1.3.1], its goal, **nirvana** (*nibbāna*), is free from conditions (*visaṅkhāra,gata*) (Dh 154):¹⁴ nirvana is **unconditioned** (*asaṅkhata*).¹⁵ Only nirvana is free from all conditions: it is “the **stilling** of all formations”¹⁶ (*sabba,saṅkhāra,samatha*).¹⁷ This stilling of all conditions is **true happiness** (Dh 368, 381).¹⁸ In the **Māluṅkya,putta Sutta** (S 35.95), the Buddha defines this **stilling of all formations** as “the ending of suffering.” After telling Māluṅkya,putta how, when we directly know what is “seen, heard, sensed or known” to be just that, the Buddha declares:

“then, Māluṅkya,putta,	you are ‘not by that.’	
When Māluṅkya,putta,	you are ‘not by that,’	then, you will ‘not be therein.’
When Māluṅkya,putta,		you are ‘not therein,’
	then, you will ‘be neither here nor beyond nor between the two.’ ¹⁹	
This is itself the ending of suffering.” ²⁰		(S 35.95,13), SD 5.9

The language here reflects a different level of experience, that of full and joyful liberation. “**Not by that**” (*na tena*) means that we will not be aroused by lust, what lust hates, and related defilements. In short, we are controlled neither by our sense-experiences nor the world that they reflect.²¹ We will “**not be therein**” (*na tattha*) means that we are not defined by what we see, hear, sense or cognize. We are truly independent of others and what is outside of us. We are well cultivated and at peace within.²² We will “be neither here nor beyond nor between the two” (*n’ev’idha na huram na ubhayam antarena*) means that we will not be reborn anywhere here in this world, nor in some other realm or future birth, nor will be caught up in an intermediate state. We have attained nirvana.²³

1.2 THE SUPRAMUNDANE PATH**1.2.1 The 4 paths**

1.2.1.1 The noble eightfold path is **the foremost of conditioned states** [1.1.3.1] because it is the one and only way out of conditioned states, the world we have created in and around us. When we walk the path, our heroic effort transforms it into a supramundane path, the evolution of awakening.

¹⁴ See SD 12.12 (2.4.2)

¹⁵ See **Asaṅkhata S** (S 43.2), SD 55.9; SD 2.10 (3.2.3); SD 26.8 (1.2); SD 40a.9 (2.8).

¹⁶ “Formations” (*saṅkhārā*) here refers to all “constructed things,” whatever we see, hear, sense or know: see SD 3.13 (5.2.1).

¹⁷ See **Mahā Māluṅkya,putta S** (M 64,9.3) SD 21.10.

¹⁸ See SD 8.8(1); SD 31.7(7.3); SD 32.5 (6.5.5).

¹⁹ “Be neither here ... nor between the two,” *n’ev’idha na huram na ubhayam antarena*, meaning that one would not be reborn anywhere. See SD 5.9 (3.2.4).

²⁰ On this enigmatic koan-like teaching, see **The taming of the bull**, SD 8.2(10).

²¹ See SD 5.9 (2).

²² See SD 5.9 (2).

²³ See SD 5.9 (3.2.4).

This is the path, the inward journey, through the *false* self, discovering the true self, and transcending that for non-self and for unconditioned freedom or nirvana.

1.2.1.2 The supramundane way (*lok'uttara,magga*) comprises 4 paths, that is, those of the noble individuals (*ariya,puggala*) or true saints, namely, the arhat (*arahata*), the non-returner (*anāgāmī*), the once-returner (*sākadāgāmī*), and the streamwinner (*sotāpanna*).²⁴ Between the worldlings and the saints (the learners and the adept) stand the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*).

They are listed in **the (Sekha) Uddesa Sutta** (A 3.85), a definitive discourse on how the 3 trainings are related to the attaining of sainthood.²⁵ The Sutta is also the locus classicus on how the various kinds of saints break the 10 mental fetters (*saṃyojana*), which are as follows:²⁶

(1) <u>self-identity view</u>	<i>sakkāya,ditthi</i>	} The 3 fetters are <u>underscored</u>
(2) <u>spiritual doubt</u>	<i>vicikicchā</i>	
(3) <u>attachment to rituals and vows</u>	<i>sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa</i>	
(4) sensual lust	<i>kāma,rāga</i>	
(5) repulsion	<i>paṭigha</i> ²⁷	
} The 5 lower fetters <i>oram,bhāgiya saṃyojana</i>		
(6) greed for form existence	<i>rūpa,rāga</i>	} The 5 higher fetters <i>uddham,bhāgiya saṃyojana</i>
(7) greed for formless existence	<i>arūpa,rāga</i>	
(8) conceit	<i>māna</i>	
(9) restlessness	<i>uddhacca</i>	
(10) ignorance	<i>avijjā</i>	

Table 1.2.1.2 The 10 fetters

1.2.1.3 The basic model of sainthood consists of the 4 types of saints, each with his attainment of moral virtue, concentration and wisdom, and the kinds of fetters he has broken, as follows:

	moral virtue (<i>sīla</i>)	concentration (<i>samādhi</i>)	wisdom (<i>paññā</i>)	fetters broken (<i>saṃyojana</i>)
streamwinner (<i>sotāpanna</i>)	complete	limited	limited	the first 3 fetters [1.2.1.2]
once-returner (<i>sakadāgāmī</i>)	complete	limited	limited	the first 3 fetters & diminishing of lust, hate, delusion
non-returner (<i>anāgāmī</i>)	complete	complete	limited	the 5 lower fetters: reborn in the pure abodes, ²⁸ and there attains final nirvana [13.1.6]
arhat (<i>arahata</i>)	complete	complete	complete	all 10 fetters

Table 1.2.1.3 The fetters, the saints and their destinies (A 3.85), SD 3.3(2).²⁹

²⁴ On the 4 saints, see **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22,42-47) SD 3.13; **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,9-12) SD 7.13; **Samaṇa-m-acala S 1** (A 4.87) SD 20.13 + 2 (A 4.88) SD 20.14.

²⁵ A 3.85/1:231 f @ SD 3.3(2).

²⁶ S 5:61, A 5:13, Vbh 377.

²⁷ In some places, *paṭigha* is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*).

²⁸ The pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*) are the five highest heavens of the form world (*rūpa,loka*) inhabited only by non-returners who live their last lives there before becoming arhats and attaining nirvana. These worlds are Āviha ("Non-declining"), Ātappa ("Unworried"), Sudassā ("Clearly Visible"), Sudassī ("Clear-visioned") and Akaniṭṭhā ("Highest") (D 3:237, M 3:103, Vbh 425, Pug 42-46).

²⁹ Cf Vism 1.14/6.

1.2.1.4 The first 5 are **the lower fetters** (*oram, bhāgiya*) [1.2.1.2], so called because they bind us to existence in the *lower* realms, that is, those of the sense-world. The remaining 5 are **the higher fetters** (*uddham, bhāgiya*), that bind us to the *higher* realms, that is, those of the form world or the formless world. Either way, the fetters chain us to samsara, the cycle of rebirths and redeaths.

Note that the first three fetters have been underscored. These are the well known “**3 fetters**,” breaking which, we become streamwinners. This is like the very first “base-camp” at the beginning of a real journey up the the oath of awakening. It marks the start of the supramundane path, that of the noble saints. [1.6.6]

1.2.1.5 In terms of practice, we should strive to at least attain **streamwinning** (*sotāpatti*), the saint who has broken the first 3 fetters [1.2.1.3]. To do this—say all the 10 suttas of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25)³⁰—we should constantly and habitually reflect on impermanence, that is, practise the perception of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*). This practice will not work by itself—if it did, then, any secular scholar or non-Buddhist doing this would become a streamwinner! For that, we need the following training:

- (1) fulfill moral virtue, that is, mindfully and lovingkindly, keep to at least the 5 precepts;³¹
- (2) maintain some level of mindfulness, that is, mental calm and clarity (with or without dhyana);
- (3) a basic level of wisdom, namely, a basic understanding of impermanence, or full wise faith in its universality;
- (4) living our lives in this manner, we will gradually diminish and abandon:³²
 - (a) the self-identity view (the wrong view that this body is an abiding entity),
 - (b) spiritual doubt (that is, we commit our efforts to the possibility of awakening and clearly understanding the 4 noble truths), and
 - (c) superstition (that is, not caught up in rituals or vows for spiritual solace or freedom).

The moral virtue, mindfulness and wisdom aspects, properly cultivated, help harmonize our practice, helping us to be more morally virtuous, more mindful and wiser over time. Such a cultivation is fertile ground, conducive to the effective study of the early teachings of the suttas, which, in turn, inspires us to deepen our practice.

1.2.1.6 With proper Dharma practice, **streamwinning** may arise immediately, or at any time within this life, but certainly by the last breath, according to the 10 suttas on the perception of impermanence in **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25) [1.2.1.5]. It is unlikely that we would at once know that we have attained streamwinning. It is certainly not something that can be certified by someone, as is known in some traditional ethnic Buddhist circles.

However, when we *do* know it, it is, as a rule, only *after the fact*, as **review knowledge** (*paccavekkhana, ñāṇa*). In the Abhidhamma tradition, this is the “recollected mental image obtained in concentration, or to any inner experience just passed, as for instance, an absorption (*jhāna*) or a supramundane path, or fruition of the path, etc (*ariya, puggala*).”³³ The suttas are less technical on this: we remind ourself to keep to our practice, instead of anticipating and measuring its progress. If we need to ask whether we have progressed or not, the likely answer is that we have not! True practitioners only diligently and joyfully practise.³⁴

1.2.1.7 The reality is that we can be, and often are, wrong about any conclusion—if we deliberately make one—that we have attained any level of sainthood. Our attaining of such a state only becomes clear when we are able to ascertain it after having attained dhyana.³⁵ A vital clue to our wholesome spiritual progress is that our own life is clearly growing in moral virtue, inner calm and joy, and deeper insight into the true reality of existence.

This is the best course we can take instead of wondering if or when we have attained any state. Suffice it to say, when we have understood any of the suttas of **the Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25), we will

³⁰ See, eg, (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

³¹ On the 5 precepts (*pañca, sīla*), see **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); **Sīlānussati**, SD 15.11 (2.2); SD 21.6 (1.2); SD 37.8 (2.2).

³² For details, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

³³ *Buddhist Dictionary*, quoting Vism 22, esp sections 19-20.

³⁴ See esp (**Ekā, dasaka**) **Cetanā'karaṇīya S** (A 11.2), SD 33.3b.

³⁵ See SD 33.1b (6.2.3.5-6).

—with our practice of the perception of impermanence—wisely and courageously aspire to attain streamwinning, which we are sure of attaining in this life itself.

1.2.1.8 The attaining of streamwinning in this life itself is to ensure that we do not fall into any of the subhuman states—those of the animal, the asura, the preta and the hell-being—as any of these states will severely prevent us from mental cultivation and spiritual progress. Streamwinning serves as a springboard for attaining higher states later in this life, or in the following life, or within three lives, but surely within seven lives.³⁶

Meanwhile, we will be reborn into a family or environment conducive to spiritual cultivation. With streamwinning, we will never be reborn in any of the subhuman states. We are preparing ourself, as we master our mind and free our heart, to break the other fetters, and attain higher levels of sainthood, that is, once-returning or non-returning, until we reach arhathood itself.³⁷

1.2.1.9 In terms of spiritual progress, the 4 kinds of saints are said to be **the “4 pairs of persons, the 8 individuals”** (*cattāri purisa, yugāni aṭṭha, purisa, puggalā*).³⁸ This traditional list of the saints is famously found in the recollection of the noble sangha (*saṅghānussati*).³⁹ These 4 pairs of noble persons and 8 individuals are as follows:

The 4 noble saints (<i>ariya</i>)	The 4 pairs (<i>cattāri purisa, yugāni</i>) The 8 individuals (<i>aṭṭha purisa, puggalā</i>) ⁴⁰
4. the arhat (<i>arahata</i>)	8. the arhat (fruition) (<i>phala</i>) 7. the one on the <u>path</u> (<i>magga</i>) to the fruition of arhathood
3. the non-returner (<i>anāgāmī</i>)	6. the non-returner (fruition) (<i>phala</i>) 5. the one on the <u>path</u> (<i>magga</i>) to the fruition of non-returning
2. the once-returner (<i>sakadāgāmī</i>)	4. the once-returner (fruition) (<i>phala</i>) 3. the one on the <u>path</u> (<i>magga</i>) to the fruition of once-returning
1. the streamwinner (<i>sotāpanna</i>)	2. the streamwinner (fruition) (<i>phala</i>) 1. the one on the <u>path</u> (<i>magga</i>) to the fruition of streamwinning

Table 1.2.1.9 The saints as pairs and individuals⁴¹

1.2.1.10 We should by now be familiar enough, at least theoretically, with **the 4 kinds of nobles** (*ariya*)—the arhat, the non-returner, the once-returner and the streamwinner—the saints of the noble path or the paths of the noble saints (*ariya, magga*) [1.2.1.3]. Other than implying that the saints of the path are the respective predecessors of the fruitions of the noble saints (*ariya, phala*), neither the suttas nor the Commentaries seem to give us any more details about these pairs of noble saints.

We can, however, see these 4 kinds of saints of the path (except for the full-fledged arhat) as being aspirants to sainthood, that is, a worldling to streamwinning, a streamwinner to once-returning, a once-returner to non-returning, and a non-returner to arhathood. These aspirations are neither prayers nor

³⁶ Further see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

³⁷ On the attaining of the other 3 stages of sainthood, see SD 21.6 (4.2).

³⁸ **Vatthūpama S** (M 7,7/1:37), SD 28.12; (**Agata, phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10,4/3:286), SD 15.3; also SD 15.10a (4).

³⁹ See **Aṭṭha, puggala S 1** (A 8.59), SDS 15.10a; **Saṅghānussati**, SD 15.10a.

⁴⁰ Of **these 8 individuals**, only the 8th (the full-fledged arhat) is a “non-learner” (*asekha*) as he is fully accomplished in the 4 noble truths by way of understanding, abandoning, attaining and practising them in all their aspects: see SD 1.1 (6). The rest are still “learners” (*sekha*), and are, as such, still subject to rebirth but in a more limited way than the worldlings: see **Sabba Kamma Jaha S** (U 3.1) & SD 39.3 (1.4.2). On the learner and the non-learner, see **Sekha S** (M 53) @ SD 21.14 (2).

⁴¹ See, eg, **Aṭṭha Puggala Suttas 1+2** (A 8.59+60), SD 15.10a (1.5). See also SD 11.1 (5).

vows, as popular in later Buddhism, but simply a determined dedication to the respective practices conducive to the level of sainthood aspired to.⁴²

1.2.1.11 It should be noted that the **progress** from one level of sainthood to the next is not a mechanical process or automatic promotion. It depends on how our mental fetters are broken and whether we have mastered samadhi (mental concentration) or the dhyanas (mental absorption). If a streamwinner is able to master dhyana, it means that he would be able to break the higher fetters and attain arhathood in this life itself.

On account of the progress of practice that brings about sainthood, it is surely true, too, that none of the 8 kinds of saints is merely a momentary being, as purported in the Abhidhamma. We know from the suttas, for example, that the state of non-returning of the path lasts at least half an aeon.⁴³ Furthermore, in **the Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 142), there is mention of alms being given to the 8 kinds of saints, that is, an arhat, an arhat-to-be, a non-returner, a non-returner-to-be, a once-returner, a once-returner-to-be, a streamwinner and a streamwinner-to-be. This shows that the saints-to-be (those “on the path”)—because they need time to consume their meals—are not mere mind-moments (as claimed by the Abhidhammikas) but exist for a significant duration.⁴⁴

1.2.2 The path of rightness

1.2.2.1 The kind of eightfold path we usually talk about is the “mundane” or “worldly” (*lokiya*) path, that is, the way of the unawakened. Once we have attained streamwinning, and beyond, the path opens up further to encompass the fruits of the path, that is, right knowledge (*sammā,ñāṇa*) and right freedom (*sammā,vimutti*). This means that we are *really free* from craving and ignorance, and that we know that we are free—the true end of the long journey. Right view is fully present in all the path-factors, while the mental fetters [1.2.1.2] are progressively broken. Hence, we now have a total 10 “right” factors of the supramundane path.

1.2.2.2 The supramundane path of 10 factors is technically called the tenfold **rightness** (*sammatta*),⁴⁵ that is, the 10 qualities of an adept (*asekha,dhamma*) or an arhat—are specifically mentioned—prefixed with “the non-learner” (*asekha* or *asekkha*)—in **the Asekha Suttas 1+2** (A 10.111+112),⁴⁶ and which is also the very last entry in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33).⁴⁷ The list is repeated in **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34), and is the last item in the whole discourse.⁴⁸ [10.2.1]

These 10 qualities are also listed in **the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta** (M 117), but without mention of the term *asekha*, thus:

(1) In this regard, bhikshus, right view comes first.

And, bhikshus, how does right view come first?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (2) From right view comes | right intention; ⁴⁹ |
| (3) from right intention comes | right speech; |
| (4) from right speech comes | right action; |
| (5) from right action comes | right livelihood; |
| (6) from right livelihood comes | right effort; |
| (7) from right effort comes | right mindfulness; |
| (8) from right mindfulness comes | right concentration; |

⁴² See, eg, **(Pañcaka) Itṭha S** (A 5.4), SD 47.2.

⁴³ An aeon (*kappa*) is a world-cycle: see SD 2.19 (9) & SD 49.8 (15.2).

⁴⁴ See **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,3-10) n, SD 1.9; SD 2.3 (1.1.3(2)).

⁴⁵ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33) lists only the 8 path-factors first as “wrongness,” *micchatta* (D 33,3.1(1)/3:255) and then as “rightness,” *sammattā* (fem) (D 33,3.1(2)/3:255); as *sammatta* (neut): **Micchatta S** (S 45.21/5:17 f). **The tenfold rightness** (*dasa sammattā*): **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,3.3(6)/3:272), **Das’uttara S** (D 34,2/2(10)/3:292); **Micchatta S** (A 10,103/5:211 f); **Samāṇa Vg, Paccorohaṇi Vg, Parisuddha Vg, Sādhu Vg, Ariya,magga Vg, Puggala Vg** (A 10,103-166/5:211-249), ie, excl A 10.101-102.

⁴⁶ A 10.111+112/5:222.

⁴⁷ D 33,3.3(6)/3:271.

⁴⁸ D 34,2.3(10)/3:292.

⁴⁹ Comy: For one with right view of the path (*magga*), the right intention of the path arises. Similarly, for one with the right view of the fruit (*phala*), the right intention of the fruit arises. The other factors (except the last two) apply in the same way as the supramundane path. (MA 4:134)

- (9) from right concentration comes right knowledge;
 (10) from right knowledge comes right freedom.

—Thus, bhikshus, the learner on the path is endowed with 8 factors, but the arhat with 10 factors.⁵⁰

(M 117,34/3:75 f), SD 6.10

1.2.3 The path of the noble ones

1.2.3.1 The eightfold path is said to be “noble” (*ariya*) because it brings nobleness or true goodness out of us. Hence, those who follow the path are also called “nobles” (*ariya*), on account of their moral virtue, inner peace and liberating wisdom. Technically, they are said to be “noble” because they have broken some of the 10 fetters, or even all of them [1.2.1.2]. Breaking the first 5 fetters frees us from rebirth in the sense-world, and breaking the remaining 5 higher fetters, frees us from being reborn in the form world and the formless world as arhats.⁵¹

1.2.3.2 The term “disciple” (*sāvaka*) is only used for followers of the Buddha, whether monastic or lay, who are noble saints—streamwinners, once-returners, non-returners and arhats. Hence, they are called “noble disciples” (*ariya, sāvaka*), because of their various virtues of both wisdom and conduct.⁵²

This nobleness arises from our emulation of the Buddha’s wisdom and conduct—he is our exemplar and inspiration. The Buddha is not some cosmic being whom we can only communicate with prayers, rituals or some strange acts—he is our **spiritual friend** who has left behind his teachings in the suttas, which can be understood through proper study and meditation. Hence, the Buddha declares

By relying upon me as a spiritual friend, Ānanda,
 beings subject to birth are freed from birth,
 beings subject to decay are freed from decay,
 beings subject to death are freed from death,
 beings subject to sorrow, lamentation,
 bodily pain, mental pain and despair are freed from them.

In this way, Ānanda, it should be known, in a manner of speaking, how spiritual friendship, good companionship, good comradeship, is the whole of the holy life.⁵³

(S 3.18,10/1:88), SD 34.2; (S 45.2/5:3), SD 34.9; (S 45.3/5:3), SD 34.10⁵⁴

1.2.3.3 Those who are not yet awakened are still “worldlings” or *puthujjana* (Skt *prthagjana*) (DhA 1:5). The Sanskrit form is derived from *prthak*, meaning “separated” (in the sense of not part of something, individualist). Popular usage generally takes *puthujjana* as “one of the many folk,”⁵⁵ meaning “worldling,” that is, says **the Puggala Paññatti**, a lay person or a monastic still caught up with the 3 fetters (of self-identity view, doubt and attachment to rituals and vows) [1.2.3.6], and not practising to give them up (Pug 1.9).

The commentary to the Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta (M 9) says that a **worldling** may be: (1) an outsider (*bāhiraka*, a non-Buddhist) who, if he accepts karma and believes in the efficacy of action, is said to have right view to that extent but which “does not conform to the truths” (*saccānulomika*)⁵⁶ since he is still actively attached to a self-view (*atta, diṭṭhi, parāmāsa, kattā*), and (2) a “worldling in the Buddha’s teaching” (*sāsanika*). (MA 1:196)

1.2.3.4 Furthermore, a worldling who professes Buddhism may be either a “blind worldling” (*andha puthujjana*), one who has neither knowledge of nor interest in the basic teachings (the truths,

⁵⁰ The additional two factors are those of the arhat. Right knowledge (*sammā ñāṇa*) is the review knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa ñāṇa*) that he has destroyed all defilements, and right freedom (*sammā vimutti*) is his experience of deliverance from defilements. (MA 4:135). This tenfold set is called “the tenfold rightness” (*dasa sammatta*) (D 3:271, 292; M 1:42; A 5:212).

⁵¹ On the 3 worlds, see Table, SD 1.7 (App).

⁵² For their virtues, see *Saṅghānussati*, SD 15.10a.

⁵³ On spiritual friendship as encompassing the whole of the holy life, see **Upaḍḍha S** (S 45.2/5:2 f), SD 34.9 & **Spiritual friendship: Stories of kindness**, SD 8.1 (3).

⁵⁴ See also SD 34.1 esp (3.2.1).

⁵⁵ Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, 1952, 3rd ed, 1972, sv puthujjana.

⁵⁶ Ie, conforming to the 4 noble truths: see ASD 12.13 (2.1.2).

the aggregates, etc), or he is a “good worldling” (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*) who has such a knowledge and diligently strives to understand and practise the Dharma. (DA 1:59)⁵⁷

The term *bāhira* is used in the suttas to refer to an “outsider,” that is, one who is not yet on the path.⁵⁸ In this sense, only streamwinners and the other saints are *not* outsiders.⁵⁹ Technically, then, to be a true Buddhist, in the sense of a Dharma practitioner, we should at least be streamwinners, the first kind of noble saints. Those who have not reached the path are still “worldlings” (*puthujjana*). For this reason, we should strive to attain at least streamwinning in this life itself [1.2.1.5].

1.2.3.5 In early Buddhism, there is no idea whatsoever that the Buddha or his saints are to be worshipped. On the contrary, such ideas are rejected, and such worship—such as that exemplified by the devas for the Buddha⁶⁰—are regarded as false devotion. However, we may recollect the virtues of the devas so that we feel joyful and are empowered to emulate them.

This, too, is the case with the Buddha. The Buddha unequivocally exhorts us not to worship him, but to respect and recollect the Dharma. To respect the Dharma means to understand what it really is—a path of self-cultivation leading to awakening—and to recollect the Dharma means to feel joyful about its precious goodness, so that we are empowered to work for our own salvation, that is, awakening. This is called the “supreme worship” (*parama, pūjā*).⁶¹

1.2.3.6 We do not worship the “path.” Moreover, the path is not out there, but within each of us when we practise the Dharma to give up self-view, doubt and superstition. These are the “**3 fetters**” —the first three of the 10 fetters—that we must diligently and wisely work to remove. Then, we have started moving up the path of awakening. [1.2.1.5]

Hence, we can rightly name the eightfold path after those who create it, the true trail-blazers of the path of awakening. Properly translated, then, *ariya aṭṭh’āṅgika magga* means “the eightfold path of the noble disciples.” We usually understand the “eight” here to refer to the 8 path-factors, but we can also reflect on this path as comprising the 8 true individuals (*aṭṭha purisa, puggala*) [1.2.1.9].

1.2.3.7 Of these 8 true individuals, the first pair is the streamwinner-to-be (who is on the path of the streamwinning, *sotāpatti, magga*) and the streamwinner-become (who has attained the fruition of streamwinning, *sotāpatti, phala*). In the (**Sotāpatti**) **Sāriputta Sutta 2** (S 55.5), the Buddha declares to Sāriputta that “the stream” (*sota*)⁶² (in “streamwinning,” *sotāpatti*) is the noble eightfold path, while “streamwinner” is the one who is endowed with the noble eightfold path. This is like a name that someone is given at birth or at some significant time in their life.⁶³

This Sutta highlights the significant connection between the streamwinner and the noble eightfold path. It is the path that is cultivated by the streamwinner. This is our learner’s progress (“learner” or *sekha* refers to those still on the path of awakening). This progress begins with the breakthrough into the path as a streamwinner. When we attain streamwinning, we become the path. [1.7.3.10]

1.3 A PHILOSOPHY OF THE PATH

1.3.1 The path as meaning and purpose of life

1.3.1.1 Here, we will examine how Pali is the language of early Buddhist ethics, psychology and spirituality. The best way to understand Buddhism is to live it, and Pali is the medium that give Buddhism the life. The Buddha Dharma is not about words; it is about bettering oneself, about self-awakening. But words are the most convenient bridge we have to cross over for a better understanding of the Buddha’s teaching. It helps a great deal, then, to understand the meaning and purpose of those words.

⁵⁷ For a longer discussion on *puthujjana*, see DA 1:59, tr Bodhi, *The All-embracing Net of Views* (D 1), Kandy, 1978: 117 f.

⁵⁸ See **Cūḷa Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 27,25.4) n + SD 40a.5 (1.1.2); **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,5(11)) + nn, SD 1.9; SD 47.1 (1.1.2).

⁵⁹ See (**Sotāpanna**) **Nandiya S** (S 55.40,4) + SD 47.1 (1.1.2).

⁶⁰ See **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,5.3/2:138), SD 9.

⁶¹ On the supreme worship, see **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16,5.3.2) + SD 9 (7.2).

⁶² On *sota* as meaning “stream” or “ear,” see SD 3.2 (3).

⁶³ S 55.5,4+5/5:347 + SD 16.5 (1.4). Cf UA 3:306 (tr UA:M 2:773 f). On the path as a stream, see also Gethin 2001: 247-252.

Once we understand the true **meaning** (*attha*) of life, we are better prepared to understand its **purpose** (*attha*), what to do about it—how to really live life so that happiness, wisdom and true peace really matter. Notice that the Pali or Indian word for “meaning” and “purpose” is the same one, that is, *attha*. What is expressed separately, narrowly, even exactly, in English, is expressed in an inseparable, interrelated but broader way in Pali. This is the versatility and power of Pali as the best language for the message of awakening.⁶⁴

1.3.1.2 In fact, *attha* is even broader in its meanings (it is polysemic). The Critical Pali Dictionary (CPD) defines *attha* under the following headings:

1. aim, purpose; end, way, result (cf 4), eg, S 1:110,27*;
2. (obliquely mostly as a suffix) “for the sake of, for that reason, for the sake of, to the benefit of”; eg, *etad-*, “for that reason” (M 1:197,32 ≈ 205,1).
3. use, need, want, desire (Sn 21, 25, 331, 431).
4. advantage, benefit, interest, one’s good (or best) (S 1:34,3*; A 1:61,1).
5. welfare (here and hereafter): Sn 190 = S 1:215,10* ≈ A 3:364,14; V 1:179,26,
6. (a) thing, matter, question, affair, business; also: case, occasion: D 3:158,21*; M 1:304,24; S 2:36,25; Sn 30, 241, 869-870; V 1:53,33.
(b) also = good things, wealth, riches: S 1:110,23*.
(c) especially a difficult case or question: D 3:184,16*; Dh 256.
7. sense, meaning, explanation (*a.* the right understanding or explanation of a word or of a matter, S 2:51,19; *b.* the truth, Sn 159; *c.* the fundamental idea, DhA 1:228,8), very frequently used in the Commentaries as *-’ti attho* = “this is the meaning” (DA 1:256,23), generally adding a new or more explicit explanation to a previous grammatical one, eg, DA 1:183,1, 208,27, 249,32-33.
8. originating from the sense of “the aim prescribed or aspired to,” or “the truth,” (the Commentaries explain this as meaning “theory” as opposed to “practice”; the right aim (proper practice): Sn 320, 323, 326, 453, p218,15 ≈ A 4:296,7; Dh 363.

This is not an exceptional case because we have many other important words, like *dhamma*, *kamma*, *kappa* and *saṅkhāra* which are all polysemic. Their senses are often easily teased out from their contexts or from intertextual readings or the commentaries.

1.3.1.3 In the suttas, a wrong teaching or practice (including speech) is often said to be “unconnected with *attha*” (*anatta, saṃhita*),⁶⁵ while a right teaching or practice is always “connected with *attha*” (*attha, saṃhita*)⁶⁶ [1.6.2.6]. Although we can *technically* (and rightly) take *attha* to mean “the goal” of awakening, even here, *attha* is **polysemic**, pregnant with all the other wholesome senses of the word. After all, whatever is *attha*—meaningful, purposeful and beneficial—is directly connected with our understanding and living a Dharma-based life, whether as celibate monastics or as lay practitioners.

1.3.1.4 The word *attha* as “meaning” and “purpose” is intimately connected with the 4 noble truths, and it is vital that we make an effort to understand this connection. It gives us a very helpful understanding of the nature and arrangement of the 4 truths. Traditionally, we generally know the 4 noble truths as listed thus (notice the sequence), as famously preserved in the so called “first discourse,” **the Dhamma, cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), thus:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| (1) the noble truth [reality] that is <u>suffering</u> | <i>dukkha ariya, sacca</i> | (suffering) (§5) |
| (2) the noble truth that is the <u>arising</u> of suffering | <i>dukkha, samudaya ariya, sacca</i> | (craving) (§6) |

⁶⁴ This is, of course, a happily biased statement, but further see **Language and discourse**, SD 26.11.

⁶⁵ **Param, maraṇa S** (S 16.12), “because this is not connected with *attha*, not connected with the fundamentals of the holy life ... “ (*na h’etaṃ ... attha, saṃhitāṃ nādi, brahma. cariyakāṃ*, S 16.12/2:223,10), SD 96.13; **Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11, of the 2 extremes), “ignoble, not connected with *attha*” (*anariyo anatta, saṃhito*, V 1:10,11 = S 56.11,3/5:421,5), SD 1.1.

⁶⁶ **Poṭṭhapāda S** (D 9), “it is connected with *attha*, connected with the Dharma, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life” (*etaṃ ... attha, saṃhitāṃ dhamma, saṃhitāṃ etaṃ ādi, brahma. cariyakāṃ*, D 9,30/1:189,12), SD 7.14; **Codanā S** (A 5.167), “I will speak with *attha*, not without *attha*” (*atthena vakkhāmi no anatta, saṃhitāṃ*, A 5.167/3:196,15), SD 88.1; **Nālaṅka S** (Sn 3.11), “when a recluse speaks much that is connected with *attha*” (*yaṃ samaṇo bahu bhāsati upetaṃ attham*, Sn 722), SD 49.18.

- (3) the noble truth that is the ending of suffering *dukkha, nirodha ariya, sacca* (nirvana) (§7)
 (4) the noble truth that is the path leading to the ending of suffering *dukkha, nirodha, gāminī, paṭipadā ariya, sacca* (the path) (§8)

The section number (§) shows the exact location of these 4 truths in the Sutta itself. Note that the 3rd noble truth—the “ending” (*nirodha*) of suffering, that is, nirvana—which is actually the final goal of our spiritual life. Further note that “the path” (*magga*) to that goal is listed as the 4th and last truth. The purpose of this arrangement is clearly didactic: we are first told of the true reality of life (everything is unsatisfactory); then, the conditions that bring this about; then, how these conditions are removed; and, finally, we work to do just this. In short, this is the popular “teaching model” of the 4 truths.⁶⁷ [1.4.3.3]

1.3.1.5 Now, let us apply the word *attha* to these same 4 truths for a better understanding of them. The 1st truth tells us about the true reality of life. Simply put: life is impermanent (*anicca*), and therefore unsatisfactory (*dukkha*); that is, to say, “**all conditioned things are impermanent**” (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*), and “**all conditioned things are unsatisfactory [suffering]**” (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*) (Dh 277-278). Such clear and universal truths are simply incontrovertible, impossible to deny, and this is a good, indeed, the best, place to start our religious questioning and spiritual quest—as the Buddha has done.

The two sayings respectively form the first lines of Dh 277 and 278, and the rest of the verses (common to both lines) is even more instructive:

<i>Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā ... dukkhā yadā paññāya passati atha nibbindati⁶⁸ dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā</i>	All conditioned things are impermanent ... unsatisfactory. When one sees this with wisdom, then, one finds <i>dukkhas</i> repulsive— this is the path to purity. (Dh 277-278)
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1.3.1.6 Note the third line—“then, one finds *dukkhas* repulsive” (*atha nibbindati dukkhe*). *Dukkhe* is nominative plural; hence, it is rendered as Anglicized “*dukkhas*.” This is, of course, awkward—just to prove a point. A better translation is “sufferings,” that is, “then, one finds sufferings repulsive.” This is technically correct, because we know from **the Dhamma, cakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11) that it refers to the kinds of sufferings arising from the 5 aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations [basically, meaning karma or deliberate actions] and consciousness⁶⁹ [1.3.1.5].

However, the technically correct is best borne in mind—it is a conceptual issue—but not necessarily be seen in print: we are usually quite happy with the translation, “**In short, the 5 aggregates of clinging are suffering**” (*saṅkhittena pañc’upādāna-k, khandhā dukkhā*). Of course, here, “suffering” seems to be a gerund (a verb functioning as a noun), but for the sake of English idiom, we have treated it as a gerundival (a verb functioning as an adjective). In the translation below, *dukkhe* is rendered as “suffering,” an uncountable noun [1.3.1.7].

1.3.1.7 Now, there is a third verse that follows the two above (Dh 277-278), forming a set, and this third verse goes thus:

<i>Sabbe dhammā anattā yadā paññāya passati atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā</i>	<u>All principles are non-self.</u> When one sees this with wisdom, then, one finds suffering repulsive— this is the path to purity. (Dh 279)
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The first line—*sabbe dhammā anattā*—even in very simple Pali is terribly difficult to translate into English, and have befuddled even the most illustrious scholar monks. Here, I think, we have found the best translation, confirmed by consultations with a few contemplative monks. My point is that Pali is the language of early Buddhist ethics, psychology and spirituality: the best way to understand the Buddha’s teaching is to live it. The Buddha Dharma is not about words; it is about bettering oneself, about self-awakening. [1.3.1.7]

⁶⁷ S 56.11,5-8 + SD 1.1 (6.2.2.2).

⁶⁸ The noun of *nibbindati* is *nibbidā*, a very important term in early Buddhism: see *Nibbidā*, SD 20.1.

⁶⁹ The Sutta actually says, “In short, the 5 aggregates of clinging are suffering” (*saṅkhittena pañc’upādāna-k, khandhā pi dukkhā*) (S 56.11,5(8)), SD1.1.

1.3.1.8 Suffice it to say that *dhamma* here refers to the “**principle**” underlying all things in this world—nirvana is, of course, neither of this world nor any other.⁷⁰ Now, the term *saṅkhārā* (plural) covers all karmically potent conditions and their results, that is, the karma of the unawakened.

Arhats, on the other hand, have abandoned the potential of creating any new karma, and are conditioned only by mental states (or, *saṅkhāra*, singular) acting on their *bodies*, not their minds. No matter what kind of physical pain they feel, it only only felt it in their bodies (the first pain), but their minds remain unaffected (*no* “second” pain)—as stated, for example, in **the Sall’atthana Sutta** (S 36.6).⁷¹

1.3.1.9 The actions of an arhat (including the Buddha) are said to be “unconditioned” (*asaṅkhata*) in the sense that such actions have neither bad nor good effects on them—he has gone beyond good and bad (*puñña, pāpa, pāhina*).⁷² Hence, his actions are said to be merely “functional” (*kiriya*), without any karmic consequences on their minds. However, such actions are still governed by non-karmic principles⁷³ which are all non-self by nature, as they all have no abiding essence or permanence of any kind at all.

Nirvana is considered *unconditioned* and has no attributes. This means that we cannot meaningfully predicate (speak of) it as being “impermanent,” “suffering” or even “non-self.” To regard nirvana as “non-self” is to contrast it with a self, so that its existence, as it were, is dependent on this other fact. The point is that nirvana is beyond all attributes—independent of all comparisons with anything else: existence, non-existence, both, or neither. The fire has gone out, but has gone nowhere.⁷⁴

There is a separate and instructive study on the statement, “All principles are non-self” (Dh 279).⁷⁵

1.3.1.10 The most significant implication of the teaching of **non-self** (*anattā*) is that all pains, sufferings and states—we can use the term *saṅkhārā* (plural) collectively for all of them—arise because of conditions (*paccaya*): they are all conditioned (*saṅkhata*, the adjective of *saṅkhārā*). Since they are *conditioned* things (such as the pains and sufferings that afflict us) as well as *conditioning* things (they condition us to suffer in some way), we should understand what these pains and sufferings really are, and how they arise. When we remove these conditions, we remove the suffering.

A short note on pain (*dukkha, dukkha*) and suffering (*viparināma, dukkha*). “**Pain**” arises through our body (because it is physical) and it affects only our body.⁷⁶ “**Suffering**” refers to our mental reaction to such pains and other conditions (personal, social, emotional and psychological). *Suffering* often refers to our negative reactions to change or loss of familiar persons, things and states (conditions) that we were (and are) accustomed to.

1.3.1.11 These two kinds of sufferings are not difficult to remove if we understand that “pain is natural; suffering is optional.” In other words, we leave bodily pain in the body and not allow it to affect us *mentally* in a negative sense. Mental pain tends to numb as so that we are unable to be logical or investigate, or even be simply sensible. Similarly, we should work to understand the nature of impermanence—see it for what it really is: *change happens*—so that suffering does not affect us negatively or at all.

However, it is the third kind of suffering—the suffering that constitutes formations (*saṅkhāra, dukkha*)—this is more tricky, as formations pervade all the 5 aggregates (form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness) that we are [1.3.1.6]. We can only understand the true nature of formations with a calm and clear mind, and we can only be free of their effects with insight wisdom (that is, a direct knowledge and understanding into how they work: how they condition us, and how we can re-

⁷⁰ This is listed in DEB as “dhamma (2.9).”

⁷¹ S 36.6 (SD 5.5); also **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,20), SD 1.12.

⁷² See **Beyond good and evil**, SD 18.7.

⁷³ These non-karmic principles are the “5 natural orders” (*pañca, niyama*), ie, those of (1) heat (*utu, niyāma*), (2) heredity (*bīja, niyāma*), (3) karma (*kamma, niyāma*), (4) mental processes (*citta, niyāma*), and (5) nature (*dhamma, niyāma*) (DA 2:432; DhsA 272): see SD 5.6 (2).

⁷⁴ (**Aggi**) **Vaccha, gotta S** (M 72,16) + SD 6.15 (3.1).

⁷⁵ For detailed study on Dh 279, see **Dhamma, niyāma S** (A 3.134), SD 26.8 (esp 1.3). On the meaning of “all things” (*sabbe dhammā*), see SD 17.6 (6.2.2).

⁷⁶ It’s helpful to read up, if you have not done so, on the 4 elements (earth, water, fire and wind): see **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62,8-11) + SD 3.11 (4).

move those conditions). To do this, we need to move on to understand and act on the purpose of the path.

1.3.1.12 So far, we have essentially discussed the nature of suffering and how it arise. This is what the first two noble truths are about. With this understanding, we are ready to work on the **purpose** of these truths. This is found in the last two truths—those of the *ending* of suffering (nirvana) and the *path* to the ending of suffering. Now, we have a bit of a problem here: the teaching model works well when we explain the truths, but in actual *practice*, we need to walk the *path* first, before we can reach the *goal*. The situation is clearer when we switch the sequence of the last two truths, thus:

The meaning of life:

- (1) the noble truth [reality], that is, suffering (understanding the 5 aggregates) [1.3.1.6]
 (2) the noble truth, that is, the arising of suffering (understanding conditions) [1.3.1.9]

The purpose of life:

- (4) the noble truth, that is, the path leading to the ending of suffering (walking the eightfold path)
 (3) the noble truth, that is, the ending of suffering (nirvana itself) [5.3.2.2]

This arrangement of the 4 truths as 1-2-4-3 seems to be new to many of us. Actually, this is probably the original, and *the oldest*, arrangement of the 4 truths in the suttas. One reason for its age is that it is rarely mentioned in this arrangement (1-2-4-3), except perhaps in **the Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika Sutta** (M 149).⁷⁷ This is the “practice (or practical) model.”⁷⁸

1.3.1.13 Before we end our discussion on the arrangement of the 4 truths, it is interesting to note that there is yet another arrangement (a unique one) found in **the Brahmāyu Sutta** (M 92)⁷⁹ and **the Sela Sutta** (Sn 3.7).⁸⁰ The 4 truths are arranged as 1-4-2-3. In a key verse of these Suttas, the 1st line speaks of suffering (“what is to be known”); the 2nd line is about the path that is to be cultivated; and the 3rd line is about the result of that cultivation, that is, the abandoning of *root* of suffering, namely, craving; and finally, in the 4th line, there is the Buddha, fully awakened, alive in nirvana with remains⁸¹ (that is, with the *unclinging* or *unconditioning* kind of 5 aggregates, “free of clinging,” without the fuel for suffering or rebirth):

⁸²*Abhiññeyyam abhiññātam
 bhāvetabbañ ca bhāvitam
 pahātabbam pahīnam me
 tasmā buddho’smi brāhmaṇa.*

⁸³What is to be known has been known,
 what is to be cultivated has been cultivated,
 what is to be abandoned has been abandoned by me—
 therefore, brahmin, awakened [the Buddha]⁸⁴ am I.⁸⁵ (Sn 558)

Since this is a poem—we are allowed poetic licence—we can interpret (with some Dharma sense) these lines in another way. We can, for example, apply the commentarial set of **the 3 good dharmas** (*saddhamma*) to the verse. Line *a* refers to the theory (*pariyatti*), defining and understanding suffering. Line *b* is the practice (*paṭipatti*) of the path; and line *c*, the realization (*paṭivedha*) of freedom from suffering. The last line, *d*, simply tells us that, in this case, it is the Buddha talking about his own awakening. Having said that, surely, the sutta interpretation of the 4 truths seems more interesting.

⁷⁷ M 149,11 etc + SD 41.9 (2.4).

⁷⁸ Further see SD 1.1 (4.0).

⁷⁹ M 92,19/2:143, SD 45.7a.

⁸⁰ Sn 558 = Tha 828.

⁸¹ “Nirvana with remains,” *sa, upādi, sesa nibbāna*: see SD 45.18 (2.5).

⁸² This verse recurs in Tha 828, Nm 1:21, 2:460; Nc:Be 64, 85; Kvu 86, 88, 107, 108, 170, 216×2; quoted at UA 84, ItA 1:149, ThaA 3:49, BA 25, NmA 1:186, PmA 1:215, VA 1:115.

⁸³ See **Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11,5-8) + SD 1.1 (6.2).

⁸⁴ Here *buddho* can be either a noun (“the Buddha”) or a past participle (“awakened”), as in §15.

⁸⁵ Lines *cd* recur in **Brahmāyu S** (M 91,31/2:143), SD 63.8.

1.3.2 The breadth and space of language

1.3.2.1 We should remember that, in this section thus far, we have been discussing the breadth and spaciousness of Indian languages, such as Pali and Sanskrit [1.3.1.1]. This breadth and space of expression can be understood as an evolutionary process, that is, centuries of observation and understanding of nature, natural processes and human nature, that characterizes Indian religions. All this has produced its most nourishing and shade-giving tree of the sweetest fruit in the Buddha’s teachings.

With this breadth and space in Pali and other Indian vernaculars, the Buddha and his early saints are able to teach the Dharma in a most versatile manner, presenting the profundity of true reality in the simplest language that at once closely relate to all our actions and very being—and to spiritually progress from there to even higher states towards awakening. The free and simple language of early Buddhism speaks directly to the heart, and is easily recognized by the wise practitioner who has tasted the Dharma.⁸⁶

After the Buddha’s passing, the language of the new Buddhist texts became more complex and philosophical, as it to compensate for what they miss with the Buddha’s death. These new texts became statements in themselves rather than reflecting states of Dharma spirituality. When Buddhism reached China, with the sinicization of Buddhism, the texts themselves became a truth unto themselves: the word is the thing, lively living liberating truths fossilized by the nature of the Chinese language. Chan and Zen tried to break this sarcophagic seal, but created its own problems when they rejected the suttas. [5.5.4.3]

1.3.2.2 In important ways, then, the religious language of early Buddhism is non-technical, even poetic, simply because it expresses and inspires what is closest to our hearts: understanding the true nature of life and making the best of it. It is in this sense that we can well understand the succinct statements of the Buddha, such as this famous remark preserved in **the Anurādhā Sutta** (S 22.86):

“Before, Anurādhā, and now, too, I declare only suffering and the ending of suffering”
(*Pubbe cāhaṃ anurādhā etarahi ca, dukkhañ c’eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhan’ti*).⁸⁷

This is an excellent example of the simple efficacy of the early Buddhist teachings free from technicalities and over-imagination. A closer look at the context of **the “only suffering” pericope** in the Anurādhā Sutta is instructive. Here is the passage in full:

“But, Anurādhā, when a tathagata [a being]⁸⁸ is not being apprehended by you as true and real here in this very life, is it fitting for you to declare:

‘Avuso, when a tathagata—the highest person, the supreme person, the attainer of the supreme—is describing that tathagata, he describes him *apart* from these 4 grounds, that is,

a tathagata exists	after death, or
a tathagata does not exist	after death, or
a tathagata both exists and not exist	after death, or
a tathagata neither exists nor not exist	after death.’?”

“No, bhante.”

“Good, Anurādhā, good! Before, Anurādhā, and now, too,

I declare only suffering and the ending of suffering.” (S 22.86,21/3:119), SD 21.13

1.3.2.3 This important passage has put into words what is really ineffable: this is the closest we can possibly approach the true nature of the Buddha, or perhaps, we can say “the Buddha’s nature.” This is a non-technical statement of something non-technical, that which cannot be pinned down into words, much less measured by technicality. However, once we introduce or use terms like “Buddha-nature” or *Buddha, dhātu* or *Tathagata, garbha*—technicalizing it—we freeze-dry and petrify it into a

⁸⁶ This is not to say that there are no “difficult” or tricky passages in the early Pali texts (such as Sutta Nipāta, or even the Dhammapada, see, eg, Dh 97 @ SD 10.6), but such passages are usually difficult only to the non-practitioner, but is often intelligible to anyone when they are free (temporarily at least) from the 3 unwholesome roots.

⁸⁷ S 22.86,21.2 (= S 44.2) + SD 21.13 (2). This statement is explained in **Yamaka S** (S 22.85,37), SD 21.12.

⁸⁸ On *tathagata* as “being” (*satta*), see S 33.86,4 n (SD 21.13).

statement or dogma as a magic wand for crowd control, wealth management and pleasure maximization.

We have killed truth (like netting a rare and beautiful butterfly in our technicalities and imaginations, and put it in a bottle of chloroform), masterly pinned it down onto a setting-board, and conveniently labelled it with a taxonomical term for all to look at and despair. We have turned spiritual states into grand philosophical *statements*. Of course, there's nothing wrong with this, as far as scholarship goes, but it should not be confused for the direct and immediate experience of the truth and beauty⁸⁹ of what is envisioned in the Buddha's words. Then, we see that living butterfly flying freely in the bright warm sunlit open space.

It's fun and profitable to play with words and ideas with theses and theories, with philosophy and religion. But, if we want to rise beyond words and free ourselves from ideas, especially religion itself—and truly prosper—then, it helps to at least remember that the map is not the place, the word is not the thing,⁹⁰ the name is not the named,⁹¹ the statement is not the state.⁹² We must simply be there to watch the sunset.⁹³

1.3.3 The middle way

1.3.3.1 The locus classicus of the teaching on the eightfold path as the middle way is **the Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta** (S 56.11), where it says:

2 [*Mv 1.6.17*] Then, the Blessed One addressed the company of 5 monks thus:

“Bhikshus, there are these **two extremes** to be avoided by one who has gone forth. What are the two?”

3 (1) The devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures—it is low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable],⁹⁴ and

(2) the devotion to self-mortification—it is painful, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable].⁹⁵

3.2 Bhikshus, without turning to either of these extremes, there is **the middle way**⁹⁶ awakened to by the Tathagata [thus come], that gives rise to vision, to knowledge, to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana.⁹⁷ (S 56.11,2-3 = V 1:10), SD 1.1 (3.2)

1.3.3.2 Two well known applications of the “middle way” theme are found in **the Araṇa Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 139) and **the Rāsiya Gāmaṇi Sutta** (S 42.12), both of which address the two extreme views but in an exhortative manner. Then, the noble eightfold path is presented as the “middle way” in exactly the same terms as the Dhammacakka Pavattana Sutta [1.3.3.1].⁹⁸

⁸⁹ On truth and beauty in a right livelihood context, see SD 37.8 (6.1.2.7)

⁹⁰ On the problem of language, see *Saṅkhāra*, SD 17.6(2) & SD 17.4 (4).

⁹¹ See SD 26.3 (5.1.2.5).

⁹² On the Buddha's use of terms non-technically, see esp (**Licchavī**) **Siha S** (A 8.11), SD 71.5. On the misuse of meditation terms, see “State or statement? *Samādhi* in some early Mahāyāna sūtras.” *The Eastern Buddhist* ns 34.2 2002:51-93. <http://docslide.us/documents/state-or-statement-samadhi-in-some-early-mahayana-sutras.html>.

⁹³ On the non-technical nature of early Buddhist terms, such as *nibbāna*, see SD 50.13 (3.2.5.2).

⁹⁴ “Low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable],” *hīno gammo puthujjaniko anariyo anatta,saṃhito*. On *gamma* = *gāma,dhamma*, see **Gavesī S** (A 5.180,17) n, SD 47.16. See foll n.

⁹⁵ On these **2 extremes**, see (3.1). Note that while “the devotion to the enjoyment of sensual pleasures” (*kāma,sukh'allikānuyoga*) is described as being “low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]” (*hīno gammo puthujjaniko anariyo anatta,saṃhito*), “the devotion to self-mortification” (*atta,kilamathānuyoga*) is said to be only “painful, ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable]” (*dukkho anariyo anatta,saṃhito*). This is because despite being “painful,” self-mortification, with some moral virtue, can bring about a divine afterlife; but such a goal is still “ignoble, not connected with the goal [unprofitable],” because we are still caught up in samsara, and not liberated from suffering. See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (4.1). On *sukh'allikānuyoga*, see **Pāsādika S** (D 29,23/3:130), SD 40a.6.

⁹⁶ *Majjhima paṭipadā*.

⁹⁷ See **Araṇa,vibhaṅga S** (M 139,3/2:230), SD 7.8, where the statement is made in an exhortative tone.

⁹⁸ Respectively, M 139,4/3:230 f, (SD 7.8); S 42.12,4/4:330 (SD 91.3).

1.3.3.3 The Acelaḥka Paṭipadā Suttas 1 & 2 (A 3.151+152) presents the extreme views of “indulgence” (*āgālhā*) (comparable to the extreme of sensual indulgence) and of burning (*nijjhāmā*) (which seems to refer to self-mortification)—as in the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta. Avoiding both these extremes is the middle way, which here, however, is presented in the form of the 4 right efforts, that is, cultivating the desire (*chanda*) for the non-arising of unarisen bad unwholesome states, the non-arising of arisen bad unwholesome states, the arising of unarisen wholesome states and the maintenance of arisen wholesome states.⁹⁹ [6]

1.3.3.4 The Dhamma,dāyāda Sutta (M 3) similarly presents a pair of bad extremes, that is, that of greed (*lobha*) and that of hate (*dosa*). The extreme of greed clearly alludes to the extreme of sensual indulgence, while the extreme of hate, that of self-mortification. They are clearly the psychological roots of these two extremes. The middle way is a familiar one, that is, the abandonment of greed and hate, that is, the noble eightfold path.¹⁰⁰

1.3.3.5 In the Ogha,taraṇa Sutta (S 1.1), the very first discourse of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha describes, in figures, how, while on his noble quest as a Bodhisattva, keeping to the middle way, he crosses over the floods of defilements, thus:

“When I halted, avuso, I sank; but when I struggled, I was swept away. Thus, avuso, by neither halting nor by struggling, I crossed the flood.”¹⁰¹ (S 1.1/1:1)

The Buddha’s brief but dramatic statement, is given a comprehensive treatment by the Sutta’s commentary, by way of seven dyads (*satta duka*), that is, by “halting” one sinks, and by “struggling” one is swept away, respectively, thus:

- (1) “halting” by way of defilements, one sinks; “struggling” by way of volitional formations (*abhisankhārā*) [karma], one is swept away;
- (2) “halting” by way of craving and views, one sinks; “struggling” by way of other defilements and volitional formations, one is swept away;
- (3) “halting” by way of craving, one sinks; “struggling” by way of views, one is swept away;
- (4) “halting” by way of the eternalist views, one sinks; “struggling” by way of annihilationism, one is swept away;¹⁰²
- (5) “halting” by way of the proclivity for recoiling that is existence views, being stuck to passing beyond that is non-existence view, one sinks; “struggling” by way of struggling on account of restlessness, one is swept away;
- (6) “halting” by way of devotion to sensual pleasures, one sinks; “struggling” by way of self-mortification, one is swept away;
- (7) “halting” by way of all unwholesome formations, one sinks; “struggling” by way of all wholesome mundane formations, one is swept away. (SA 1:19)

1.3.4 The middle way in perspective

1.3.4.1 Apparently, the “middle way” theme did not play such a salient role in the early suttas as it did in the later texts, such as those in the second period¹⁰³ and the post-Buddha development, especially with such thinkers as Nāgārjuna.¹⁰⁴ This is not to say that the “middle way” theme is not important in the suttas. The theme is not exclusively used for the eightfold path, but also in relation to other teachings.

The most frequently quoted and important canonical text for Nāgārjuna is not the Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta (S 56.11), but apparently the Nidāna Saṃyutta (S 12), especially **the Kaccā(ya)na,-**

⁹⁹ A 3.151+152/1:295-297.

¹⁰⁰ M 3,8/1:15 (SD 2.18).

¹⁰¹ *Yadā svāhaṃ āvuso santiṭṭhāmi tadā’ssu saṃsīdāmi. Yadā svhaṃ āvuso āyūhāmi tadā’ssu nibbuyhāmi. Evaṃ khv-āhaṃ āvuso appatiṭṭhaṃ anāyūhaṃ oghaṃ atarin’ti.*

¹⁰² Cf It 43,12-44,4.

¹⁰³ Ie, the last 25 or so years of the Buddha’s public ministry. On the 2 periods, see SD 1.1 (2.2) & SD 40a.1 (1.3).

¹⁰⁴ Late 2nd cent CE: see SD 6.13 (4).

gotta Sutta (S 12.15), which mentions the two extreme views of being and non-being, both of which Nagarjuna’s works philosophically and poetically transcend.¹⁰⁵

Similarly themed discourses are **the (Pabajjā) Acela(ka) Kassapa Sutta** (S 12.17), **the Aññatara Brāhmaṇa Sutta** (S 12.46) and **the (Sabba) Jānussonī Sutta** (S 12.47), all of which record the Buddha commenting on the extreme views that “all exists” (*sabbam atthi*) and that “nothing exists” (*sabbam n’atthi*), and of eternalism (*sassata*) and annihilationism (*uccheda*)—and “not following either of these extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dharma by the middle” (*ete te ubho ante anupagamma majjhena tathāgato dhammam deseti*). The “middle” here, however, is the wisdom aspect of the eightfold path presented as dependent arising (*paṭicca samuppāda*).¹⁰⁶

1.3.4.2 A couple of questions are relevant here. If the middle way is commonly understood to be so central to Buddhism (or at least, early Buddhism), why is it not mentioned more often than what we have examined above? Furthermore, if the middle way is such a central teaching related to the eightfold path as commonly perceived, why is it only mentioned less than half a dozen times in the suttas? In fact, the middle way is more often presented in relation to dependent arising than to the eightfold path. This is understandable as dependent arising is the central teaching in early Buddhism.

1.3.4.3 Both these questions can be answered together and the answer lies in the history of the Buddha’s own “noble quest,” as recorded, in the same words, in **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36), **the Bodhi Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 85) and **the (Deva) Saṅgārava Sutta** (M 100). The Bodhisattva, having lived a sensually luxurious life as a young prince and then torturing his body in meditation in almost every imaginable way, without any progress, realizes that his meditation is likely to work if his mind is truly happy. In other words, it is possible (against the prevailing views) to cultivate wholesome pleasurable states that actually conduce to deep meditation and dhyana. Hence, he reflects, “**I fear not the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome states!**”¹⁰⁷ The Suttas continue with this same account:

“ ... it occurred to me, ‘It is not easy to attain that pleasure with a body so excessively emaciated. Suppose I ate some solid food—some boiled rice and porridge.’

And I ate some solid food.

Now, at that time, the 5 monks were waiting upon me, thinking, ‘If our recluse Gotama attains some state, he will inform us.’

But when I ate the boiled rice and gruel, the 5 monks were disgusted and left me, thinking,

‘**The recluse Gotama now lives luxuriously. He has given up the quest and reverted to luxury!**’” (M 36,33), SD 49.4 = (M 85,38), SD 55.2 = (M 100,39), SD 10.9.

1.3.4.4 Very soon after his awakening, the Buddha goes to meet these very same monks, as they have served him well before, and they are spiritually well ready to hear his teaching and benefit from it. The Vinaya records how, when the Buddha meets the 5 monks again in the deer park at Isipatana, they still harbour a sense of disappointment towards him and react to him in a lukewarm way.¹⁰⁸

The Buddha, after pointing out to the monks that he has never spoken to them like this before, convinces them to hear him out. When they finally agree to listen, the Buddha fittingly, famously and firstly exhorts them on the middle way: “Bhikshus, there are these **two extremes** to be avoided by one who has gone forth.” Their common wrong view has to be removed before they can be properly instructed further. And, with that, their minds are calmed, cleared and readied for awakening.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ S 12.15 (SD 6.13), qu at **(Dvi,lakkhaṇa) Channa S** (S 22.90/3:134 f), SD 56.5. See also **Notion of diṭṭhi**, SD 40a.1 (10.1.1).

¹⁰⁶ Respectively, S 12.17/2:20 (SD 18.5); S 12.46/2:75 f (SD 83.9); S 12.47/2:76 f (SD 68.6).

¹⁰⁷ *Na kho aham tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṁ taṁ sukham aññatt’eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi* (M:Ee 1:247,3; M:Ce 1: 584,4 and M:Se 1:458,5; *yantam*, after which Se continues directly with *aññatr’eva*, omitting *sukham*). On the 2 kinds of pleasures—sensual pleasure and the pleasure of renunciation—see **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9.3/3:233), SD 7.8. On pleasure experienced by the awakened mind, see **Uṇṇābha S** (S 51.15), SD 10.10.

¹⁰⁸ Mv 1.6.10-16 (V 1:8-10).

¹⁰⁹ The oldest account of the first discourse is prob that found in **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,29-43), SD 1.11. But there is no mention of the middle way or the eightfold path there. This simply means that there are other teachings given to the group of 5 monks. For further details on the middle way, see SD 1.1 (3).

1.4 THE PATH AS A NOBLE TRUTH

1.4.1 The truth that is the path

1.4.1.1 Traditionally, the noble eightfold path is a noble truth (*ariya, sacca*) because it is the path leading to the *ending* of suffering, that is, the fourth of the 4 noble truths. This is the path taken by the noble saints—the streamwinners, the once-returners, the non-returners and the arhats-to-be. The arhats have, of course, completed the journey. The others, including the arhats-to-be or “path” arhats (*araha-ta, magga*) are called learners (*sekha*) because they are the true students of the Dharma, who are ready for awakening. Those who are not yet streamwinners are called “outsiders” (*bāhiraka*).¹¹⁰

1.4.1.2 If the 4th noble truth is a path (*magga*), then, as aspirants to awakening and liberation, we have to journey on the path. The **journey** is a figure of speech for self-discovery, self-effort, self-healing and self-liberation. The “self” here is the mind,¹¹¹ which links up our moments of experience to become a person, and over many lives as a being. When we walk the path, we experience the self and the mind as a learning process. Aptly, the true path-walkers—the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner, and the arhat-to-be—are all “learners” (*sekha*)—and the path is simply a figure for cultivation (*bhāvanā*) or training (*sikkhā*) by self-effort to become “true individuals” [1.4.3].

1.4.1.3 Before we can get to the eightfold path, we need to get out of the narrow, madding crowd that is our world, whether it is a personal life of a single person or that of a family person or an un-awakened renunciant. The way out of the crowded life (*sambādha*) is given in **the Sambādh’okāsa Sutta** (A 6.26), where Mahā Kaccāna exults as follows:

It is wonderful, avuso! It is marvellous, avuso!
How the attaining of “an opening” [the open] (*okāsa*) in the confined [the crowded] (*sambādha*)¹¹² has been discovered
by the Blessed One, who knows, who sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one,¹¹³
for the purification of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation,
for the disappearance of physical and mental pain,¹¹⁴
for gaining the right way,¹¹⁵
for realizing nirvana ...

A 6.26 (SD 15.6)

1.4.1.4 The way out of the worldly crowd, says Mahā Kaccāna in the Sutta, is found in **the 6 bases of recollection** (*cha anussati-ṭ, thāna*), that is, the recollection of the 3 jewels, of moral virtue, of charity, and of the devas. These meditations are so helpful that they are popularly known as the “inspiring meditations.” They are said to be “inspiring” because of the joy that arises from our **wise faith** (*avecca-p, pasāda*)¹¹⁶ in the meditation object—in the Buddha, the Buddha Dharma, the noble sangha, moral virtue, charity or the devas.

“Wise faith” refers to our joy of insight, knowing any of the 6 meditation objects, deeply understanding what they really are in inspiring wholesome qualities in us. It is not “thinking” about them, but about “feeling” their qualities. In this way, joy (*veda*) or zest (*pīti*), or perhaps some depth of samadhi, will arise in us. To do this, we need to clear our mind of worldly things, and simply focus on

¹¹⁰ **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1) mentions some of those outsiders who are able to attain deep dhyana and recall many past lives (D 1,31-37) + SD 25.1 (5.2) + 25.2. (**Sotāpanna**) **Nandiya S** (S 55.40) effectively says that only the streamwinners onwards are *not* outsiders (S 55.40,4) + SD 47.1 (1.1.2). See also **Cūḷa Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 27,25.4) n + SD 40a.5 (1.1.2).

¹¹¹ On self = mind, see SD 26.9 (1.6.2; 2.1.2).

¹¹² *Sambādhe okāsādhigamo*, where Skt version reads *sambādhe avakāśe viśeśādhigamā*, “the realization of a distinctive opening in the confined” SD 15.6 (2.3.2). Here, *sambādha*, “the confined” or “the crowded” refers to the household life. See SD 15.6 (2.3.3).

¹¹³ *Yāvañ c’idaṃ tena bhagavatā jānatā passatā arahatā sammā, sambuddhena sambādhe okāsādhigamo anubuddho*.

¹¹⁴ *Dukkha, domanassa*, sometimes tr as “pain and sadness.” See Walshe 1996 (D:W 589 n627). For a broader sense of *domanassa*, see §3 n (SD 13.3) on *abhijjhā, domanassa*.

¹¹⁵ “For gaining the right way,” *ñāyassa adhiḡamāya*. See Intro (3.3), SD 13.1.

¹¹⁶ See “blind faith, wise faith,” SD 40a.1 (3.2).

any of them with some mindfulness. We can do this even if we are not experienced meditators. In fact, this is the kind of meditation that works for the inexperienced.¹¹⁷

1.4.1.5 Let us return to our discussion on the path out of our crowded life. **The path** is a beautiful figure for the way out of the narrowness and crowdedness that is the world towards the true spaciousness and freedom that is nirvana. The best known figure of the path to nirvana is the one found in the parable of the ancient city in the Nagara Sutta (S 12.65), which goes as follows:

19 It is just as if, bhikshus, a man, while wandering in a forest on a mountain-side, arrives at an ancient road, an ancient highway [a straight, direct way], followed by people in the past.

19.2 He arrived there.

Having arrived there, he sees an ancient city, an ancient royal city, inhabited by people, endowed with parks, endowed with forests, endowed with lotus ponds, and surrounded with ramparts—delightful.

20 Then, bhikshus, the man informs the rajah or a royal minister:

“Please, sir, you should know this:

While I was wandering in a forest on a mountain-side, I saw an ancient road, an ancient highway [a straight, direct way], followed by people in the past.

20.2 I followed it, and following it, I saw an ancient city, an ancient royal city, inhabited by people, endowed with parks, endowed with forests, endowed with lotus ponds, and surrounded with ramparts—delightful.

Would you, sir, please renovate that city.”

S12.65,19-20 (SD 14.2)

The Buddha then explains that the path here is the noble eightfold path. Following it, we will directly know each of the 12 links of dependent arising (*paṭicca,samuppāda*) by way of the 4-truth model—that is, we directly know decay-and-death, birth, existence, clinging, craving, feeling, contact, the 6 sense-bases, name-and-form, consciousness and volitional activities as truth, arising, ending and the way leading to their ending.

If our direct knowledge is the *path*, then our liberation is *nirvana*, signified by **the ancient city**. To **“renovate”** the ancient city means that we diligently put together teachings and methods for the benefit of others. In fact, the Sutta closes by stating how the Buddha, with his direct knowledge, then explains it to all his followers, monks, nun, laymen and laywomen, for the benefit of everyone, devas and humans.¹¹⁸

1.4.2 The two paths and nirvana.

1.4.2.1 The noble eightfold path is not only *a path*—a method of personal development and spiritual cultivation—it is also the foremost of conditioned states (*saṅkhārā*)¹¹⁹ [1.1.3.1]. This is stated in a number of suttas, such as:

Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta	M 44,9-11	SD 40a.9, SD 21.6 (3.1.1)
(Catukka) Agga-p,pasāda Sutta	A 4.34,1.2	SD 45.13
Cundī Rāja,kumārī Sutta	A 5.32/3:34	SD 66.4

Whether the path is *mundane* (that of the unawakened) or *supramundane* (that of the saints), both are said to be “conditioned” (*saṅkhata*). A simple way of understanding this is that the path is *made up of parts*—3 parts to be exact: those of moral training, mental training, and wisdom training (collectively called the “3 trainings”) [1.5]. In other words, the path means gradual progress towards awakening and nirvana. Hence, it is said to be “the foremost of conditioned states” [1.1.3.4].

¹¹⁷ For details of the practice of these 6 recollections, see SD 15.

¹¹⁸ S 12.65,20.2 (SD 14.2). SA explains this parable in great detail, showing the correspondences between the elements of the parable and aspects of the Dharma. For a more detailed parable of the city, see **Kiṁsuka S** (S 35.204 = S:B 35.245), where it is said to be a frontier city (*paccantima nagara*), and highlights the guarding of the sense-doors as a part of mental cultivation, ie, the 2nd of the 3 trainings of the path: see **Sīla samādhi paññā**, SD 21.6. Table 3.2.1.

¹¹⁹ See DEB: saṅkhārā (1.9).

1.4.2.2 We begin our proper Dharma practice by walking the “eightfold path” (*aṭṭh’āṅgika magga*)—keeping the precepts, cultivating the mind, and honing insight wisdom—leading to stream-winning. Then, we are now no more an outsider [1.4.1.1], but a noble saint of the path. Upon attaining streamwinning, we get our first glimpse of nirvana. If we move on from here, we are then taking the “noble eightfold path” (*ariya aṭṭh’āṅgika magga*). At this point, streamwinning is like our key base-camp before embarking on our trek through the jungle to the ancient city.

1.4.2.3 At this stage, each path-factor is a wholesome state, with which we diligently work away at its opposite “wrong” (*micchā*) factor, until all unwholesome states or mental “fetters” are destroyed [1.2.1.2]. When all these fetters are destroyed, we have cultivated two more path-factors—right knowledge (*sammā,ñāṇa*) and right freedom (*sammā,vimutti*)—to become an arhat (*arahata*). Thus, we have completed the tenfold path of “rightness” (*sammatta*).

This arhat path is described more fully in **the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta** (M 117).¹²⁰

1.4.3 Cultivating the path

1.4.3.1 A useful and interesting way of understanding the eightfold path is to reflect on the difference between what we “have” or can have and what we “are” or can be. Whatever things that are out there in the world—people, things, pleasures, fame, power, holiness—are not ours, and we can never *have* them. It is in this way that the Buddha declares to Moggallāna that in this world, “nothing is worth clinging to” (*sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāyā*). One who understands this, fully understands all things—and so rightly awakens to true reality.¹²¹

1.4.3.2 Conversely, if it is true that nothing in this world is worth clinging to, there is also no way we can really measure anything. “**Measuring**” (*māna*) is a false and foolish attempt to put value on things that have no value in the first place. We vainly attribute such values to things outside of ourselves, and then we feel a desire for them. We want to “have” them—the truth is that whatever we *have* can never be really “ours.” If we measure ourselves and others by what we have, and if we were to lose what we have (which would surely be the case, sooner or later), then, what are we? The answer is simply: nothing.¹²²

1.4.3.3 Our mastery of the 4 noble truths—suffering, its arising, its ending and the path—trains us on the eightfold path, preparing us for the *noble* eightfold path. Notice here that the path is placed 4th and last, as it marks the end of the journey on the mundane or worldly level of the eightfold path. This is both the “teaching” model (when we instruct others) and the “learning” model (when we have internalized the path ourselves). [1.3.1.4]

1.4.3.4 Once we start on our journey on the *noble* eightfold path, we then understand more clearly the nature of suffering and its arising, we work at its ending (the path), and we reach the end of the path (nirvana) as an arhat. This is the “practice” or “noble” model, a sequence that is found in **the Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika Sutta** (M 149)¹²³ [1.3.1.12] where we see a clear correlation with the regime of medical treatment, thus:¹²⁴

<u>The noble truths</u>			<u>Medical model</u>
(1) suffering	(<i>dukkha</i>)	3 kinds ¹²⁵	disease
(2) arising	(<i>samudaya</i>)	craving	diagnosis
(3) path	(<i>magga</i>)	the noble eightfold path	prescription and treatment
(4) ending	(<i>nirodha</i>)	nirvana	recovery and good health

¹²⁰ M 117 (SD 6.10).

¹²¹ A 7.58,11.2 (SD 4.11).

¹²² See Reflections, **To have or to be?** R166, 2010, & **Give what we cannot lose**, R205b, 2011.

¹²³ M 149,11 etc + SD 41.9 (2.4).

¹²⁴ See SD 1.1 (5.3).

¹²⁵ The 3 kinds of suffering are those of pain (*dukkha,dukkha*), of change (*vipariṇāma,dukkha*) and of conditions (*sankhāra,dukkha*): see SD 1.1 (5.3).

1.4.4 Grouping the path-factors

1.4.4.1 As stated in the **Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), the path-factors are arranged in 3 groups: factors 3-5, as we have noted [1.4.2.2], deal with moral virtue (*sīla*); factors 6-8 deal with mental concentration; and factors 1-2 deal with wisdom. This is the famous sequence of the 3 trainings: moral virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*).¹²⁶

1.4.4.2 The path, then, is the cultivation of three vital aspects of our being, thus:

- **Moral virtue** addresses our body, or more precisely, our bodily actions and speech, so that we act in morally and ethically wholesome ways, restraining any physical or verbal expressions of greed, hate or delusion (the 3 roots of unwholesome conduct);¹²⁷ this is essentially Buddhist ethics.
- **Mental concentration** addresses the inner manifestations of greed, hate or delusion, or negative emotions, by focusing and refining our attention so that it frees the mind of the effects from these roots and keeps it calm and clear; this is essentially Buddhist psychology.
- **Wisdom** arises from our seeing directly into the nature of true reality, a vision that brightens with vision and broadens with joy as we progress on the path; this is essentially Buddhist spirituality.

1.5 THE 3 TRAININGS

1.5.1 The 2 levels of training

1.5.1.1 The **Mahā,vaḅga** or “great chapter” (S ch 5), which brings the Saṃyutta to a grand close deals with the 7 sets [1.1.1.1], but it gives its own arrangement of them, placing the noble eightfold path *first*. Bodhi thinks that this is probably “for the sake of emphasis: to show this most ancient formulation of the practice as the quintessential expression of the Buddha’s way to liberation” (S:B 1492). There is actually another very simple reason for this: the eightfold path is the largest of the set, with 8 factors. The 7 awakening-factors then follow because they have “the widest compass” after the eightfold path (id).

1.5.1.2 The **Magga Saṃyutta** arranges **the 7 sets** as follows (with the original sequence numbering mentioned first), followed by the Saṃyutta chapter name and numbers:

(7) The noble eightfold path	1	Magga Saṃyutta	[S 45]
(6) The 7 awakening-factors	2	Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta	[S 46]
(1) The 4 focuses of mindfulness	3	Satipaṭṭhāna Saṃyutta	[S 47]
(4) The 5 spiritual faculties	4	Indriya Saṃyutta	[S 48]
(2) The 4 right strivings	5	Samma-p, padhāna Saṃyutta	[S 49]
(5) The 5 spiritual powers	6	Bala Saṃyutta	[S 50]
(3) The 4 bases of spiritual success	7	Iddhi, pāda Saṃyutta	[S 51]

The point to be noted here is that **the eightfold path** is placed first, showing its primary place in the teachings. We may even surmise that this was actually the original—the oldest—arrangement, before the popularity of the 4 focuses of mindfulness took precedence in the listing.

1.5.1.3 Another interesting point is that there are 4 themes—diligence (*appamāda*), that which is to be done with power (*bala, karaṇīya*), search (*esanā*) and floods (*ogha*)—that run through all these 7 sets presented in the 7 Saṃyuttas. The precedence of **diligence** shows its primacy, and it is also the most familiar teaching, highlighted as the foremost wholesome state in the (Dasaka) Appamāda Sutta (A 10.15).¹²⁸ Diligence runs through all the 7 sets.

1.5.1.4 “That which is to be done with power [strength]” refers to the cultivation of **moral virtue**. This is, of course, the aggregate of moral virtue, which runs through all the 7 sets, too. “Search” or “quest” refers to following the wrong path or right path in our spiritual quest, as elaborated in **the Ariya Pariyesanā Sutta** (M 26).¹²⁹ And “floods” here refers to various negative qualities, such as sensuality, existence, views and ignorance, and whatever else that hinders our spiritual progress.

¹²⁶ M 44,9-11 (SD 3.11).

¹²⁷ On the 3 unwholesome roots, see **Mūla S** (A 3.69), SD 18.2 & SD 4.14 (1.5).

¹²⁸ A 10.15 (SD 42.23).

¹²⁹ M 26,5-12 + 30 (SD 1.11).

The rearrangement of the 7 sets in the Mahā, vagga (Saṃyutta ch 5) and the same 4 themes running through them attest to the fact that the components of each of these 7 sets overlap and intersect—yet they all serve only one purpose: to explain the nature of the path of awakening and guide us along it.

1.5.1.5 In the mundane path [1.4.2], the “3 trainings” (*sikkha-t, taya*) are simply those of moral virtue (*sīla, sikkha*), mental concentration (*samādhi, sikkhā*) and wisdom (*paññā, sikkhā*). The term “training” (*sikkhā*) refers to the progress of the unawakened towards streamwinning in this life itself. These precepts are the “steps of training” (*sikkhā, pada*). Then, there is the “higher training.”

1.5.1.6 The term “higher training” refers to what the suttas and commentaries call the training in higher moral virtue (*adhisīla, sikkhā*), higher mind (*adhicitta, sikkhā*) and higher wisdom (*adhipaññā, sikkhā*).¹³⁰ Note that the second higher training uses *citta*, “mind,” that is, “higher mind training” instead of *samādhi*. This is because there is a need for some mindfulness and mental concentration to attain streamwinning or once-return, and a need for dhyana to attain non-returning or arhathood.¹³¹

In monastic training, the path is generally referred to as the “higher training” (**adhi, sikkhā*),¹³² which is the same term for the supramundane path of the noble saints. The reason for this is clear: true monastics renounce the world to work in this life itself to attain the noble path.

Monastics, as avowed renunciants, should diligently cultivate their minds to transcend bodily and mental limitations to taste pure joy, so that they are able to truly renounce the world of sensual pleasures—this is the higher renunciation that expedites their journey to awakening. This is done through dhyana meditation and insight wisdom, the heart’s calm and clarity. Hence, we can say that the higher path is characterized by the attainment of dhyana or some wholesome level of mindfulness. [8.1.2]

1.5.1.7 Here’s a summary of the lower and higher paths of training:

atth’āṅgika magga, the eightfold path

(the mundane path (*lokiya magga*) for the unawakened, non-monastics):

<i>sīla sikkhā</i>	training in moral virtue
<i>samādhi sikkhā</i>	training in concentration
<i>paññā sikkhā</i>	training in wisdom

ariya atth’āṅgika magga, the noble eightfold path

(the mundane path for monastics; the supramundane path for the saints, except arhats):

<i>adhi, sīla sikkhā</i>	training in higher moral virtue
<i>adhi, citta, sikkhā</i>	training in higher mind
<i>adhi, paññā sikkhā</i>	training in higher wisdom

1.5.1.8 The prefix *adhi-* (like *abhi-* in *abhidhamma* and *abhivinaya*) also simply means “in connection with, related to.” Hence, *adhi, sīla* includes a basic sense of “in connection with moral virtue,” and so on for *adhi, citta* and *adhi, paññā*,¹³³ too (D 1:174,18). Here are the 3 trainings in contrast to the eightfold path in its progressive sequence, thus:

<u>path-factors</u>	<u>(aṅga)</u>	<u>training (sikkhā)</u>	<u>(khandha)</u>
(7) right view	<i>sammā ditṭhi</i>	} <u>III. wisdom aggregate</u> (freedom-based mind)	<i>paññā khandha</i> (straightened views)
(8) right intention	<i>sammā saṅkappa</i>		
(1) right action	<i>sammā kammanta</i>	} <u>I. moral virtue aggregate</u> (the body and speech)	<i>sīla khandha</i> (wholesome conduct)
(2) right speech	<i>sammā vācā</i>		
(3) right livelihood	<i>sammā ājīva</i>		
(4) right effort	<i>sammā vāyāma</i>	} <u>II. concentration aggregate</u> (the mind)	<i>samādhi khandha</i> (mental stillness)
(5) right mindfulness	<i>sammā sati</i>		
(6) right concentration	<i>sammā samādhi</i>		

Table 1.5.1 The eightfold path and the 3 trainings¹³⁴

¹³⁰ The phrase *adhisīla, sikkhā* etc, is found at V 3:24,13; D 3:219,13; M 1:324,28.

¹³¹ On the necessity of dhyana (*jhāna*) for attaining arhathood, see SD 8.5 (2); SD 15.1 (13); SD 41.1 (2.2.2.4); SD 23.6 (4). Dhyana is necessary for overcoming sensual lust, the very first of the mental fetters, so that we are no more attracted to sensual pleasures, worldly or divine.

¹³² The initial prefix signifies a neologism: the word *adhisikkhā* is not found in the suttas or commentaries, but is a helpful term for our purposes here.

¹³³ See **Kassapa Sīha, nāda S** (D 8,21/1:174,18), SD 73.12.

¹³⁴ See D 2:312; M 1:61, 3:251; Vbh 235. See also SD 6.10 (1.2); SD 21.6 (3.2.1); SD 47.3 (Table 1.3.1.2).

1.5.1.9 The Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta (M 44) contains an important dialogue on the noble eightfold path, which is here produced in full for further examination:

(9) “Sister, **what is the noble eightfold path?**”

“Avuso Visākha, it is just this noble eightfold path, that is, right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.”

(10) “Sister, is the noble eightfold path conditioned (*asaṅkhata*) or unconditioned (*saṅkhata*)?”

“Avuso Visākha, the noble eightfold path is conditioned.”¹³⁵

(11) “Sister, are the 3 aggregates (*khandha*) (of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*) composed of the noble eightfold path, or is the noble eightfold path composed of the 3 aggregates?”

“The 3 aggregates, avuso Visākha, are not composed of the noble eightfold path, but, avuso Visākha, the noble eightfold path is composed of the 3 aggregates.¹³⁶

(11.2) Right speech, right action, and right livelihood—these dharma comprise the aggregate of moral virtue. Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration—these dharma comprise the aggregate of concentration. Right view and right thought—these dharma comprise the aggregate of wisdom.” [1,6] (M 44,9-11/1:300 f), SD 40a.9¹³⁷

1.5.1.10 The sequence of the 8 path-factors may appear somewhat haphazard to a beginner. An understanding of how early Buddhism sees the individual and the nature of being will reveal what is actually a natural progression of spiritual cultivation. We will see how one factor is the basis for the next, and how they are thus interconnected. It is like a path with 8 parallel lanes for walking, and we can or need to change lanes at appropriate times.

1.5.1.11 Right view comes “first and foremost” because we must be able to distinguish between the right and wrong path-factors. In fact, right view underlies all the other path-factors, making them “right” (*sammā*)¹³⁸ [1.8]. Right view dispels spiritual ignorance, the very first factor in dependent arising—suffering is rooted in ignorance. With right view, there arises right intention or wholesome thoughts.

When the mind thinks rightly and feels well, it inspires right speech and right bodily action. In the prime of our lives, most of our action is related to our work and some kind of dealing with others and our environment: therefore, we cultivate right livelihood.

With right livelihood, we are naturally inclined to towards right effort, which is basically avoiding bad and doing good. This habit is the basis for right mindfulness, whose calm and clarity conduces to the development of right concentration, that is, a mind that is spacious, bright, calm and alert.

1.5.1.12 In simple terms, when we walk the path properly, we are building a healthy mind in a healthy society. This is the **worldly path**. For those—especially the monastic renunciants—who cultivate the path with greater moral virtue, deeper meditation and clearer wisdom—two more path-factors arise. They are right knowledge and right freedom—this path, as we have noted, leads up to arhatood [1.2.1]. This is a *synchronic* process—a here-and-now mental process—occurring in an arhat, as described in **the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 117).¹³⁹

1.5.1.13 For most of us—the unawakened—the path is best understood as a diachronic process, one that works over time, even over many lives. Furthermore, as a worldly path, the path-factors not only do *not* arise sequentially, but they, at least in part, arise simultaneously as conjoined mental factors in the same cognitive process.¹⁴⁰

The commentary to the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta says that *right view*, *right effort* and *right mindfulness* are co-existents (*saha, jātā*) and precursors (*pure, jātā*). Right effort and right mindfulness are co-

¹³⁵ Comy explains *saṅkhata* as “thought out, arranged, put together, worked at, produced, to be attained by the attaining” (*ceṭito kappito pakappito āyūhito nibbattito samāpajantena samāpajjitabbo*) (MA 2:361).

¹³⁶ *Na kho āvuso Visākha ariyena aṭṭhaṅgikena maggena tayo khandhā saṅgahīta, tīhi ca kho āvuso Visākha khandhehi ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo saṅgahīto.*

¹³⁷ See also SD 21.6 (3.1).

¹³⁸ See **Mahā Cattārisaka S** (M 117/3:71-78, esp §§4, 10, 16, 22, 28, 34 f), SD 6.10.

¹³⁹ M 117,34 (SD 6.10).

¹⁴⁰ The Abhidhamma habitually speaks of a single conscious moment, but here we will keep to the sutta teaching of a more gradual process.

existent with supramundane right view. The insight that is right view is the precursor of supramundane right view (MA 4:132).¹⁴¹

In essence, this is how the path works upon us—but this only happens when we walk the path diligently and keep to the right lanes, as it were. In other words, the path-factors work in a natural sequence, each set enhancing the other.

1.5.2 The 3 stages of training

1.5.2.1 The arrangement of the 8 factors of the path, with right view as the first, and right intention following it, both forming the wisdom training (*paññā,sikkhā*) of the path, serves to highlight the fact that “right view comes first.” Right view underlies all the other path-factors, making each of them “right” (that is, it works towards the ending of bad and suffering) and bringing us *nobleness* (goodness in the true sense) [Table 1.5.1]. It has already been pointed out that **the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta** (M 117) states just this fact [1.1.3.2].

1.5.2.2 Whether we are walking the mundane path heading for streamwinning, or the supramundane beyond that and on to arhathood, the fact remains that right view should underpin all the other path-factors, which means that these path-factors should work to bring about right view. In this sense, right view—the key path-factor—is both the beginning, middle and end of the path.

The “beginning” (*ādi*) of the path is moral training; its “middle” (*majjhe*) is concentration training; and its “ending” (*pariyosānā*) is wisdom training. We can envision these 3 trainings as boosting one another upwards in a spiral path. Or, we can see the path as going up ever higher on a mountain road to the ancient city deep in the cool heights above the clouds.

Hence, in such discourses as **the Cūḷa Hatthi, padôpama Sutta** (M 27) and **the Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhāya Sutta** (M 38), it is said of the Buddha that:

He teaches the Dharma, good [beautiful] in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. He proclaims the holy life that is entirely complete and pure.¹⁴²

(M 27,11/1:179), SD 40a.5, = (M 38,31/1:267), SD 7.10

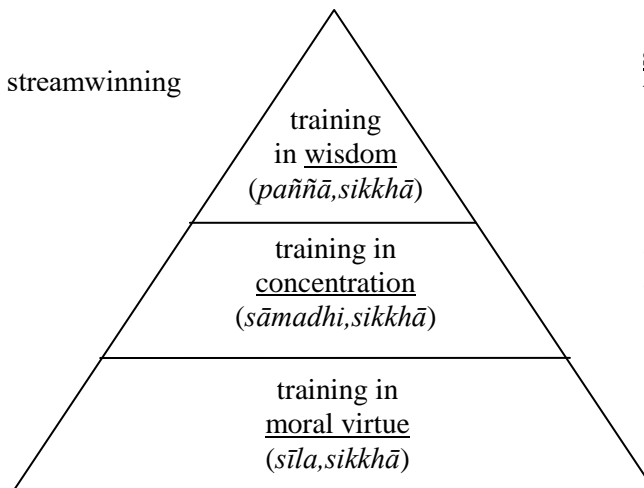
mundane path

“outsiders” working for streamwinning

1. right view
2. right intention

6. right effort
7. right mindfulness
8. right concentration

3. right speech
4. right bodily action
5. right livelihood



supramundane path

the “noble path” saints

- at least first 3 fetters broken [1.2.1.2, 1.2.1.4]

- mindfulness & samadhi
- dhyana (for non-returners and arhats)

- “moral virtues beloved of the noble ones”

Table 1.5.2 The 3 trainings (pyramid diagram)

1.5.2.3 An important feature of the 3 trainings is highlighted here. Although in spirit, right view pervades the beginning, the middle and the end of the eightfold path, in practice, we must begin with moral training. Some of us may actually have some clear and proper understanding of the Dharma—

¹⁴¹ See **Mahā Cattārīsaka S** (M 117,9 etc) + SD 6.10 (4.3.2).

¹⁴² *So dhammam deseti ādi,kalyāṇam majjhe,kalyāṇam pariyosāna,kalyāṇam sāttham sa,vyāñjanam,kevala,paripuṇṇam parisuddham brahma,cariyam pakāseti.* See DA 1:176; MA 2:202; SA 2:5; AA 2:288. For full formula and explanation, see **Dhammānussati**, SD 15.9 (2.1).

that is, right view—from the start, as a rule, but the journey on the path starts with the middle three path-factors, that is, right action, right speech and right livelihood, or **the moral virtue aggregate** (*sīlak,khandha*) of the path.

A graphic summary of what we have examined is given above [Table 1.5.2].

1.6 THE 3 TRAININGS AS AGGREGATES

1.6.1 The fruits of recluseship

1.6.1.1 Here, we will examine the 3 trainings as aggregates or groups (*khandha*), that is, as sets that work together. The 3 trainings are presented as the 3 aggregates of moral virtue, of meditation and of wisdom in an ancient pericope or stock passage known as “the fruit(s) of recluseship” (*sāmañña,phala*). This *sāmañña,phala* pericope is found in every one of the first 13 suttas (forming the “chapter on the moral virtue group,” *sīla-k,khandha,vagga*) of the Dīgha Nikāya.¹⁴³

1.6.1.2 The best known presentation of the *sāmañña,phala* is found, understandably, in a sutta of the same name, **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (D 2), as follows: moral virtue (§§43-63), mental cultivation (§§64-86), the knowledge of supernormal powers (§§87-96), and the development of liberating wisdom (§§97-98). The knowledge of supernormal powers are the fruition of mental development, but treated separately.¹⁴⁴

1.6.1.3 As a component of the fruit of recluseship (*sāmañña,phala*) pericope, moral virtue famously comprises **the “moralities”** (*sīla*), the most ancient list of monastic rules we have that predate the Vinaya itself. Their ancient provenance is evident from their three sets of simple rules for monastics that have no other legal structure or framework. The rules clearly refer to worldly activities that a renunciant should avoid as they are likely to distract him from his true tasks.

The three sets of “moralities” or rules are listed, sequentially, as the “short moralities” (*cūḷa,sīla*), the “medium moralities” (*majjhima,sīla*) and the “great moralities” (*mahā,sīla*). **The “short moralities”** list 26 rules in the following groupings:

1. Avoidance of immoral acts of body and speech (1-7).
2. Austerity in lifestyle (8-12).
3. Offerings not to be accepted (13-21).
4. Avoidance of commercial or criminal activity (22-26).

As a short list of rules, the short moralities clearly form the primary set. The medium moralities and the great moralities merely expand on the rules of the short moralities. The great moralities, however, seem to be more independent as they include rules not listed in the other two sets. However, it is the short moralities that are closer to the monastic code that we have today.¹⁴⁵

1.6.1.4 The *sāmañña,phala* **aggregate of mental cultivation** comprises sections on sense-restraint, mindfulness and clear comprehension, contentment, and the abandoning of the mental hindrances [6.3.1.3] (often with parables), which then leads into a full description of the 4 dhyanas. The dhyanas are clearly the bases for what then follows: insight knowledge (the conditioned nature of the body) and knowledge of the mind-made body.

1.6.1.5 Then, follows a listing of various modes of supernormal power, that is, psychic powers, clairaudience, mind-reading, the knowledge of one’s own past-life recollections (rebirth), the knowledge of the past lives of others (karma). All this culminates in **the aggregate of wisdom**, the most important knowledge of all: that of the destruction of the mental influxes—those of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*).¹⁴⁶ This, of course, refers to the attainment of arhathood.

Now we will go on to examine the 3 trainings as aggregates, that is, as training sets.

¹⁴³ See SD 8.10 (2).

¹⁴⁴ See DEB: *Sāmañña,phala*, & Gethin 2001:195 f.

¹⁴⁵ See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,8-27) + SD 8.10 (3).

¹⁴⁶ M 112,18-20 (SD 59.7). The 4 influxes are those of (1) sensual desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) existence (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), and (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*); a list of 3 influxes (omitting views) is prob older: SD 30.3 (1.3).

1.6.2 The moral virtue aggregate

1.6.2.1 The Dharma is said to be “good in the beginning” (*ādi, kalyāṇa*) [1.5.2.2]. This “beginning” is similarly said to be “the very beginning in wholesome states” (*ādim eva ... kusalesu dhammesu*) in the **(Satipaṭṭhāna) Bāhiya Sutta** (S 47.15), which refers to “moral virtue that is well purified, and view that is straight.”¹⁴⁷ Note here how right view is present with moral virtue (that is, right speech, right action and right livelihood) [1.5.1.6].

In the 3 trainings, this “beginning” of good things refers to the 1st set or aggregate of path-factors—right speech, right action and right livelihood—collectively known as **the moral virtue aggregate** (*sīla-k, khandha*), that is, **moral training** and all that it entails. In moral training (*sīla, sikkha*), there are lay precepts for the laity, and the monastic precepts for the renunciants. The lay precepts range from the 5 precepts (*pañca, sīla*)¹⁴⁸—the most basic and whose spirit underlies all the other precepts—to the 8 precepts,¹⁴⁹ and optionally, the 10 precepts.¹⁵⁰ The 8 and 10 precepts are meant for observance during uposatha days or special practice occasions, such as personal solitude or meditation retreats. They entail celibacy (*brahma, cariya*) (no sex of any kind) which simplifies our lives even in the case of short-term spiritual renunciation. [1.6.4.5; 4.4.3.5]

1.6.2.2 Interestingly, there are also two other not so well known sets of precepts. The first set is “**the 6 precepts**” (**cha, sīla*) or the “6 right livelihood precepts,” comprising the 5 precepts and the “right livelihood” (RL) (*sammā, ājīva*) precept. These are the “shorter” RL precepts, an innovation, a special moral training for those of us who wish to live a Dharma-based life, or even to support ourselves with a full-time Dharma-based livelihood, such as being lay Dharma-workers. Better known, however, are the “full RL precepts,” comprising a total of 8 precepts, which we shall now turn to.

1.6.2.3 There are **the 8 right livelihood precepts** (*ājīv’atṭhamaka sīla*), that is, the “moral precepts with the livelihood as the 8th precept.” These are the “full RL precepts” and comprises the 3 wholesome bodily actions, the 4 types of wholesome speech (or right speech), with the RL precept as the eighth,¹⁵¹ thus:¹⁵²

(1) abstaining from killing	<i>pāṇātipātā veramaṇī</i>	}	right action
(2) abstaining from taking the not-given	<i>adinn’ādānā veramaṇī</i>		
(3) abstaining from sexual misconduct	<i>kāmesu micch’ācārā veramaṇī</i>	}	right speech
(4) abstaining from false speech	<i>musāvādā veramaṇī</i>		
(5) abstaining from malicious speech	<i>pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī</i>	}	right speech
(6) abstaining from harsh speech	<i>pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī</i>		
(7) abstaining from frivolous talk	<i>samphappalāpā vācāya veramaṇī</i>	}	right livelihood
(8) abstaining from wrong livelihood	<i>*micchā ājīva veramaṇī</i> ¹⁵³		

Table 1.6.2 The 8 right livelihood precepts

In these 8 right livelihood precepts, the 4th precept against lying is ramified into the 4 precepts entailing right speech (*sammā, vācā*) [3]. These, together with right action (*sammā, kammantā*) [4] and right livelihood (*sammā, ājīva*) [5] form the complete first training—that of moral virtue. This practice is very significant because it is a complete training in moral virtue.

1.6.2.4 According to the Aṅguttara Commentary, **the 5 precepts** entail (basic) moral virtue, and from this comes the higher moral virtue of the 10 precepts. Then, there is the higher moral virtue that

¹⁴⁷ S 47.15,4 (SD 47.10).

¹⁴⁸ See **Veḷu, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7), SD 1.5 (2); **Sīlānussati**, SD 15.11 (2.2); **SD 21.6 (1.2)**; SD 37.8 (2.2).

¹⁴⁹ The 8 precepts, when kept on uposatha days, are called “uposatha precepts” (*uposatha, sīla*): see **(Tad-ah) uposatha S** (A 3.70,9-16), SD 4.18; **Vitthat’uposatha S** (A 8.42), SD 89.11; **Nav’aṅg’uposatha S** (A 9.18), SD 59.4.

¹⁵⁰ See Khp 2.

¹⁵¹ VismMhṭ:Be 1:33.

¹⁵² SD 37.8 (1.6.2).

¹⁵³ The initial asterisk here means that the Pali term is an innovation for the sake of convenience for a concept that exists in spirit in the ancient texts.

comprises the precepts of the fourfold moral purity (of the renunciants) [1.6.2.5]. But all these precepts are those of worldly moral virtue: only *the higher moral virtue* is supramundane.¹⁵⁴

The meaning of this explanation is clear enough. The 5 precepts are the key guide for the worldling training on the path. On attaining streamwinning, that is, embarking on the supramundane path, the 5 precepts go without saying, since they are the bases for all the other moral virtues.

1.6.2.5 Apparently, “**higher morality**,” in the commentarial usage, has two senses. The first refers to the “fourfold moral purity” (*catu, pārisuddhi, sīla*)—the moral standards for monastics—that is:

- (1) the moral virtue that is the restraint of the monastic code (*pātimokkha, saṃvara, sīla*);
- (2) the restraint of the senses (*saṃvara, sīla*);
- (3) the purification of livelihood (*ājīva, parisuddhi, sīla*); and
- (4) the moral virtue connected with the requisites (*paccaya, saṇṇissita, sīla*), that is, proper use of the basic supports of almsfood, robes, shelter, and medicine and health facilities.¹⁵⁵

The fourfold moral purity defines true monasticism. Hence, they are binding on all monastics, unawakened or awakened.¹⁵⁶

1.6.2.6 The second sense of “higher morality” refers to that of the saints. The awakened, especially the arhats, will, on account of their awakened nature, *naturally* keep to these rules. This is only a “technicality,” as the awakened saints naturally know the vitality of moral virtue and will abide by it even if it costs their life. The awakened—the arhats—on account of their full awakening (like that of the Buddha)¹⁵⁷ [9.1.2] are morally pure by nature; in fact, they are beyond good and bad [1.3.1.9].

1.6.3 Abhi, samācārika and ādi, brahma. cariyika

1.6.3.1 Before concluding our study of the moral virtue aggregate, it is helpful to know something about two more important terms—*abhi, samācārika* and *ādi, brahma. cariyika* (or *ādi, brahma. cariyaka*). Both the terms “training related to proper conduct” (*abhi, samācārikā sikkhā*) and “training that is fundamental to the holy life” (*ādi, brahma. cariyikā sikkhā*, literally, “the training that is the start of the holy life”) are found in **the Sikkhānisaṃsa Sutta** (A 4.243) in relation to the “priority of mindfulness” (*sat’ādhipateyya*, literally “lordship or authority of mindfulness”).

The holy life, says the Sutta, is lived “with the training as its benefit (*sikkhānisaṃsa*), with wisdom as its supervisor (*paññ’uttara*), with liberation as its core (*vimutti, sārā*), and mindfulness as its overlord (*sat’ādhipateyya*).¹⁵⁸

1.6.3.2 The Sutta commentary glosses on both terms. It explains *abhi, samācārika* as “related or pertaining to prescribed morality” (*paññatti, sīla*) (AA 3:217), that is, the Vinaya as a body of promulgated rules, legal procedures and conventional morality,¹⁵⁹ or basically the monastic code, the Pātimokkha. It explains *ādi, brahma. cariyika* as the holy life of the path (*magga, brahma. cariya*) (AA 3.217),¹⁶⁰ that is, the practice of the noble saints (the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner and the arhat-to-be).¹⁶¹ [5.3.4.3]

1.6.3.3 The term, *abhi, samācārika*, “related to proper conduct,” is closely connected with the 3 training aggregates. In **the Agāra Sutta 2** (A 5.23), we find this passage:

Bhikshus, when a monk
is disrespectful and irreverent, and his conduct is uncongenial to his fellow brahmacharis,
it is impossible for him to fulfill the factor of proper conduct (*abhisamācārika dhamma*).

¹⁵⁴ *Pañca, sīlaṃ sīlaṃ nāma, taṃ upādāya dasa, sīlaṃ adhisīlaṃ nāma, taṃ pi upādāya catu, pārisuddhi, sīlaṃ sīlaṃ nāma ... sabbaṃ pi lokiyam sīlaṃ sīlaṃ eva lok’uttaram adhisīlaṃ* (AA 2:345).

¹⁵⁵ See SD 24.6a (2.3).

¹⁵⁶ See, eg, (**Sekha**) **Uddesa S 2** (A 3.86/1:232-234), SD 80.13.

¹⁵⁷ See, esp, **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58), SD 49.10.

¹⁵⁸ A 4.243/2:243 f (SD 73.17).

¹⁵⁹ In contrast to “prescribed or conventional morality” (*paññatti or paṇṇatti sīla*), there is “natural morality” (*pakati sīla*), see (5.4.1.7).

¹⁶⁰ Also DA 3:1060. See also SA 1:108, which says that “the natural state of the holy life, the state when one first strives for it” (*magga, brahma. cariyassa ādi, bhūtā pubba, padhāna, bhūtā*); also AA 4:71.

¹⁶¹ See Vism 1.27/11 f.

Without fulfilling the factor of proper conduct,
it is impossible for him to fulfill the factor of a trainee¹⁶² (*sekha dhamma*).

Without fulfilling the factor of a trainee,
it is impossible for him to fulfill the aggregate of moral virtue (*sīla-k,khandha*).

Without fulfilling the aggregate of moral virtue,
it is impossible for him to fulfill the aggregate of concentration (*samādhik,khandha*).

Without fulfilling the aggregate of concentration,
it is impossible for him to fulfill the aggregate of wisdom (*paññā-k,khandha*).

(A 5.22/2:16), SD 74.21

The shorter **Agāra Sutta 1** (A 5.22) says about the same thing giving the teaching sequence as “factor of proper conduct,” “factor of a trainee,” “the precepts” (*sīlāni*), “right view” (*sammā,ditṭhi*), and ends with “right concentration” (*sammā,samādhik*).¹⁶³ The longer Agāra Sutta 2 clearly refers to monastic training, while the shorter, applies to lay practice. A similar sequence, but relating to the 3 kinds of lust (*rāga*) is given in **the (Chakka) Mitta Sutta** (A 6.67).¹⁶⁴

1.6.3.4 The adjective in the second term, *ādi,brahma.cariyika*, “having to do with the fundamentals of the holy life” (literally, “that which is the start of the holy life”), is part of the stock explaining why the Buddha teaches the 4 noble truths, as stated, for example, in **the Poṭṭhapāda Sutta** (D 9), thus:

[The Buddha teaches the 4 noble truths:]

Because it [their declaration] is

connected to the goal [connected with the beneficial] (*attha,samhita*); [1.3.1.3]

it is connected to the Dharma (*dhamma,samhita*);

it has to do with the fundamentals of the holy life (*ādi,brahma.cariyika*),¹⁶⁵

it leads to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation (of suffering), to inner peace, to direct knowledge, to awakening, to nirvana.¹⁶⁶ (D 9,30.2), SD 7.14

1.6.3.5 The (Sekha) Uddesa Sutta 2 (A 3.86) mentions the “training-rules that are fundamental to the holy life” (*sikkhāpada ādi,brahma.cariyika*) in the context of attaining streamwinning, thus:

... his conduct is constant and steady regarding those training rules that are fundamental to the holy life, proper to the holy life.

Having undertaken the training-rules, he trains in them.

With the total destruction of the 3 lower fetters,¹⁶⁷ he is a **streamwinner**, no longer bound for the lower world,¹⁶⁸ sure of going over to self-awakening.¹⁶⁹ (A 3.86), SD 80.13

¹⁶² Clearly the context here refers to a monastic trainee (*sekha*), not a path-saint.

¹⁶³ A 5.22/2:15 (SD 74.20).

¹⁶⁴ The 3 kinds of lust (*rāga*) are those for sensual pleasures (*kāma,rāga*), for form existence (*rūpa,rāga*) and for formless existence (*arūpa,rāga*): A 6.67/3:422 (SD 64.19).

¹⁶⁵ “Beneficial [connected to the goal], it is connected to the Dharma, it has to do with the fundamentals of the holy life” (*etaṃ ... attha,samhitam dhamma,samhitam etaṃ ādi,brahma.cariyakam*, D 9,30/1:189,12), SD 7.14; **Codanā S** (A 5.167), “I will speak with *attha*, not without *attha*” (*atthena vakkhāmi no anatta,samhitam*, A 5.167/3:196,15), SD 88.1; **Nālaka S** (Sn 3.11), “when a recluse speaks much that is connected with *attha*” (*yam samaṇo bahu bhāsati upetaṃ attham*, Sn 722), SD 49.18. On the significance of *attha*, see SD 10.16 (1.3.1). On *ādi,brahma.cariyika*, see SD 10.16 (1.6.2.6).

¹⁶⁶ The line is the *nibbidā* formula, see ***Nibbida***, SD 20.1 esp (3.3).

¹⁶⁷ On the (first) 3 fetters, see **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8. The fetters are broken by the practice of the perception of impermanence, see (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1) + SD 16.7 (5) & **Mahā Rāhu’ovāda S** (M 62,23), SD 3.11.

¹⁶⁸ *Avinipāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”; opp of *vinipāta*, “the world of suffering,” another name for the 4 woeful courses (*duggati*) or the 4 lower worlds (*apāya*) (Vism 13.92 f). Sometimes, 5 courses or destinies (*pañca,gati*) (D 33,2.1(4)/3:234; A 11.68) are mentioned: the hells (*niraya*), the animal birth (*tirachāna,yoni*), the ghost realm (*pitti,visaya*), the human world (*manussa*) and the heavenly world (*deva*). Of these, the first three are woeful, with the asura-demons (*asura,kāya*) as the fourth woeful course. The remaining two—the devas and humans—are “happy courses” (*sugati*). For a discussion, see Nyanaponika & Bodhi (tr), *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, 1999:14-19. See (**Pañca**) **Gati S** (A 9.68/4:459), SD 2.20.

1.6.3.6 The moral virtue that is fundamental to the holy (*ādi, brahma.cariyika sīla*) or the moral virtue that is the start of the holy life refers to what must come *first* before the holy life is even possible. In this sense, it refers to the moral virtue aggregate (*sīla-k, khandha*), that is, right speech, right action and right livelihood.

1.6.4 The concentration aggregate

1.6.4.1 Early Buddhism abhors rituals. Moral virtue is not good in itself: if it were; then, it would be a ritual discipline, even a religious pretence. Moral virtue has a vital purpose: it is the basis for the other two trainings. Moral virtue is not merely a mundane matter of just being good; it is the basis for meditation as mental cultivation.

If we are habitually immoral, or if we are ridden with worry or guilt over the smallest perceived wrong that we think we have done, this would be a hindrance to mental cultivation and spiritual progress. Our moral virtue—even a wholesome recollection of moments of moral virtue—clears our mind for the cultivation of inner calm and clarity.

1.6.4.2 From **Table 1.5.2**, we can see how the moral virtue aggregate forms the foundation of the whole 3-training path. It should also be understood that moral virtue is not merely a step or link in the path, but the very spirit that pervades the other two trainings. Moral virtue prepares us for mental cultivation, that is, **the concentration aggregate** (*samādhi-k, khandha*).

Mental concentration here is mental stillness that is the basis for a calm, clear and open mind. A mind or heart of lovingkindness, for example, inspires us to happily keep the precepts well promoting moral virtue. Moral virtue, in its turn, strengthens our practice of lovingkindness and inner joy. It is easier to keep the precepts when our heart is happy and our mind is positive. So moral virtue and concentration work together to help one another spiral up the path.

1.6.4.3 Moral virtue is a wholesome disciplining of body and speech, the most overt aspects of our being, those that are in constant interaction with the external world. In terms of path training, wholesome action and speech means *less or no* action or speech, or at least *mindful* action or speech. We enlist, as it were, our body and speech to the service of the evolving mind.

In this way, our body and speech do not serve as the media for unwholesome states or negative emotions. We have closed the body-door and speech-door, so that we need only guard the mind-door. Even at this stage, moral virtue, in fact, works best with wisdom—like our two hands or our two feet washing each other¹⁷⁰—to keep the mind free from the world and ready to look at itself.

1.6.4.4 The concentration aggregate (*samādhi-k, khandha*) comprises two kinds of mental cultivation: the mundane and the supramundane. On a mundane level, if we are **lay practitioners**, we should work to at least attain some level of mindfulness, if not some samadhi or mental stillness. If we are a lay person, especially one “who enjoys sensual pleasures” (*kāma, bhogī*)¹⁷¹—such as a family person, or a working or professional person, or an independent single—we should habitually practise the perception of impermanence.¹⁷² [1.2.1.5]

1.6.4.5 **Monastic renunciants** have taken the vows of celibacy, poverty, simplicity and the holy life, working for arhathood or non-returning in this life itself. This means that we, as renunciants, have to be diligent in attaining dhyanas, so that we are able to happily give up all attachment or attraction to sensual pleasures. If as monastics, we have difficulty doing deep meditation, then we should at least work towards streamwinning as stated above.

¹⁶⁹ *Yāni ca kho tāni sikkhāpadāni ādi, brahma.cariyakāni brahma.cariya, sārubbāni, tattha dhuva, sīlo ca hoti thita, sīlo ca, samādāya sikkhati sikkhāpadesu. So tiṇṇaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayā sotāpanno hoti avinipāta, dhammo niyato sambodhi, parāyaṇo* (A 3.86/1:231 f), SD 80.13.

¹⁷⁰ **Soṇa, daṇḍa S** (D 4,21), SD 30.5.

¹⁷¹ A *kāma, bhogī* (one who indulges in sensual pleasures) is a category of lay followers who enjoys sensual pleasures within the spirit of the 5 precepts: see **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73,10/1:491), SD 27.4.

¹⁷² On the perception of impermanence (*anicca, saññā*), see any of the 10 suttas of **Okkanta Vagga** (S 25), or (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

1.6.4.6 On a supramundane level, the streamwinner, the once-returner, the non-returner and the arhat-to-be should continue to attain “further distinction” (*upari,visesa*),¹⁷³ that is, work towards awakening. A saint will never fall back from his state, but he may remain “stuck” to it by enjoying the bliss of the moment, and allowing himself to be reborn into high rebirths that lasts for many, even thousands, or hundreds of thousands of world-cycles. The idea is to awaken as soon as possible, like getting well from an illness and staying in the best of health.

1.6.5 The wisdom aggregate

1.6.5.1 The wisdom aggregate (*paññā-k,khandha*) is the beautiful “ending” (*pariyosāna*), the third of the 3 trainings of the eightfold path [1.5.2.2]. This aggregate comprises right view [1.8] and right intention [2]. The very last path-factor is listed as right intention—but not so in actual sequence of our spiritual evolution on the path of awakening. With the shaping and perfecting of wisdom, there arises in us “right knowledge” (*sammā ñāṇa*), which is the true and full direct seeing into the 4 noble truths, the fourfold vision of true reality, this time as a liberating experience. And finally—the true and real ending—that is, “right freedom” (*sammā,vimutti*), arhathood.

1.6.5.2 Why must we follow this sequence—moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom—and why is it that the process seems to take such a long time? The reason for this is that we have been acting and reacting with our baggage of defilements, but we do not recognize this. We have dwelt in the wrong path since we first started thinking and acting, way back in our mental evolution. The way out is to find the right path, and to train ourselves in spiritual development. Specifically, we need to undergo the 3 trainings.

The 3 trainings (*ti,sikkhā* or *sikkha-t,taya*) comprise the training in higher moral virtue (*adhisīla sikkhā*), the training in higher mind (*adhicitta sikkhā*), and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā sikkhā*).¹⁷⁴ Once our right view is clear and steady enough, we begin our journey on the “higher” path, here meaning with greater focus of the mind and the right kind of wisdom. The purpose of the training is, of course, to destroy the mental defilements at different levels. This process is summarized thus:¹⁷⁵

<u>training (sikkhā)</u>	<u>abandoning (pahāna) of</u>	<u>defilement</u>	<u>abandoning (pahāna) by</u>
higher moral virtue	transgression (<i>vītikkaṃma</i>)	misconduct	substitution (<i>tad-aṅga</i>)
higher mind	obsession (<i>pariyuṭṭhāna</i>)	craving	suppression (<i>vikkhambhana</i>)
higher wisdom	latent tendencies (<i>anusaya</i>) ¹⁷⁶	view	uprooting (<i>samuccheda</i>)

Table 1.6.5. The 3 trainings and levels of defilements

¹⁷³ Or, more fully, “progressively higher distinction,” *ulāraṃ pubbenāparaṃ visesaṃ*, which refers to (1) a dhyana (*jhāna*) or (2) any of the 4 stages of sainthood: streamwinner (*sot’āpanna*), once-returner (*sākad’āgāmī*), non-returner (*anāgāmī*) and arhat (*arahanta*). Refs for (1): **Dhamma,cetiya S** (M 89,12+18/2:121, 124), SD 64.10; **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.3+10/5:154 f ×5), SD 24.2. Refs for (2): **Ānāpāna,sati S** (M 118,2 +6/3:79 f), SD 7.13; as *ulāraṃ visesaṃ*, only in **Lohicca S** (D 12/1:229-233 passim), SD 34.8.

¹⁷⁴ D 1:207, 3:220; A 1:229.

¹⁷⁵ Vism 1.13/5. On the levels of practice, see SD 15.11 (2).

¹⁷⁶ Latent tendencies (*anusayā*). There are 7 of them: (1) lust for sensual pleasures (*kāma-c, chanda*); (2) repulsion (*paṭigha*); (3) wrong view (*diṭṭhi*); (4) spiritual doubt (*vicikicchā*); (5) conceit (*māna*); (6) lust for existence (*bhava,rāga*); (7) ignorance (*avijjā*). They are listed in **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.3(12)/3:254), **Anusaya S** (A 7.11 & 12/4:9) and **Vibhaṅga** (Vbh 383). They are deeply embedded in our mind through past habitual acts and can only be uprooted on attaining the Path. (3)-(4) are eliminated upon streamwinning; (1)-(2) upon non-returning; (5)-(7) upon arhathood. See Abhs 7.9: “The latent dispositions (*anusaya*) are defilements which ‘lie along with’ (*anuse-ti*) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions. The term ‘latent dispositions’ highlights the fact that the defilements are liable to arise so long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths. Though all defilements are, in a sense, *anusayas*, the 7 mentioned here are the most prominent” (Abhs:B 268). See also Abhs:SR 172; and also **Madhu,piṇḍika S** (M 18), SD 6.14(5) & **Sall’atthana S** (S 36.3), SD 5.5 Intro.

1.6.5.3 In practical terms, we can train ourself not to allow the defilements (the overt expressions of greed, hate or delusion) to occur. **The transgression level** (*vītikamma*) is a gross level of defilements, where they instigate unwholesome bodily and verbal actions. This level of abandoning our defilements starts with a proper understanding of the 5 precepts [1.2.1.5] and rightly practising them.

It is not easy to practise the precepts by themselves. We need some strength to refrain from killing, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from lying and from getting intoxicated in different ways. The practice of charity—giving, generosity and cultivating lovingkindness—is the basis for an effective practice of the 5 precepts. The vision of our personal happiness and the desire of others (including animals) for such a happiness further moves us in this wholesome direction of charity. This is a vision of a heavenly life here and now.

Finally, it helps us tremendously to see the “danger, vanity and disadvantage of sensual pleasures and the advantages of renunciation.” In simple terms, renunciation means “letting go,” that is, letting go of our negative emotions, especially lust and hate.¹⁷⁷ For this reason, we often see the Buddha, and teachers who emulate him, give us this kind of **progressive talk**¹⁷⁸ on the Dharma to ready us with inner peace and joy for deeper teachings, especially the 4 noble truths.¹⁷⁹

1.6.5.4 Our giving, generosity and lovingkindness must be wholesomely deliberate and conscious acts. While giving is an overt act, generosity begins in the heart and acts joyfully through thought, speech and bodily action. Lovingkindness needs to be constantly cultivated, like the breath itself: it helps to try to take in lovingkindness and give away lovingkindness with our every breath. This is what should habitually happen on the preconscious level of our mind, that is, our mental state before acting it out.¹⁸⁰ This is how higher moral virtue expedites our journey on the eightfold path—by *substituting* the potential negative emotions with wholesome ones before we actually act.

1.6.5.5 If we are still unawakened, behind our habitually wholesome preconscious mind there still lurks craving on **the obsession level** (*pariyuṭṭhāna*), the shadows that still haunt us from our past, reacting to the slightest trigger in our present—when we are unmindful or unhappy. In our hearts, we still need to deliberately and consciously suppress the lurking negative emotions, as far as we are conscious of them, or even before that, if we know ourself better.

Suppressing negative emotions is a conscious act, even if it is in the privacy of our preconscious. This is what we have to do for ourself, even with help or inspiration from outside. However, we need to be *aware* of a negative emotion—it is easier to overcome the enemy when he is brought into the open. Constant and deep lovingkindness is a powerful way of exposing—and accepting these negative emotions deeply buried under the rough and rubble of our memories and conditioning. To truly and beneficially see ourself in this way, we must accept ourself completely, just as we are. Again, only we can and must do this for lovingkindness to empower us to suppress negative emotions and tendencies, so that they do not otherwise obsess us.

1.6.5.6 With this understanding and undertaking, we can more readily face the most difficult part of our journey. We need to confront the darkest shadows in our life. When we look into this deep darkness, it seems to stare back at us. Hence, this is a very difficult—not to say frightening—enterprise, but our courage begins and grows when we learn to look at the wild darkness that clouds our life. Only then, we begin to learn to tame and free it into the light of awakening.

These shadows are difficult to see because they lie deep and dark in the false stillness of our hearts. They lie there waiting to take over our life when we unmindfully open the doors (*dvāra*) of our speech, body and mind,¹⁸¹ trying to darken, even destroy, what is good in us and others. They lurk; hence, they are called “latent tendencies” (*anusaya*), they lie waiting for any opportunity to force themselves upon us when we are weakest and least prepared. In our study of the path, it helps to see the most fearsome appearance of these latent tendencies, that is, in what is referred to in the equally

¹⁷⁷ See *Kāma-c.chanda*, SD 32.2.

¹⁷⁸ See SD 21.6 esp (1); SD 46.1 (4.1); SD 30.8 (3.4.2): Skillful means of speech; SD 49.8b (7.3.2): the “progressive talk” pericope.

¹⁷⁹ SD 49.8b (7.3).

¹⁸⁰ On the preconscious, see SD 17.8a (6.1); also SD 17.8b esp (1.1.2; 2.2) & SD 7.10 (3.3).

¹⁸¹ On these 3 doors of karma, see SD 5.7 (2.2.2).

fearsome compound *adhiṭṭhānābhinivesānusaya*,¹⁸² translated as “the mental standpoints, adherences and latent tendencies.”

1.6.5.7 They are “mental standpoints” (*adhiṭṭhāna*) because they are the foundations for the unwholesome mind, and “adherence and latent tendencies” because they adhere to the mind and lie latent there.¹⁸³ This compound embodies the canonical roots for the commentarial conception of the 3 levels of defilements.

The “mental standpoint” or “mindset” (*adhiṭṭhāna*) here refers to the motivation behind the gross level of transgressive defilement. The “adherence or habituation” (*abhinivesa*) or inclination refers to the motivation behind the habitual level of addictive or obsessive defilement. And the “latent tendencies” (*anusayā*) lie dormant in the life-continuum (*bhavaṅga*), ever ready to rear their fearsome heads and wreak havoc at the slightest instigation.¹⁸⁴

Breaking the 10 fetters

1.6.6 Breaking the 3 fetters

1.6.6.1 Wisdom challenges misperceptions of reality, weakening and reducing them, so that they are removed. Ultimately, wisdom removes even latent, underlying forms of greed, hate and delusion that are rarely apparent in conscious thought. Before we can even start to do this, we need to understand what we are really facing. The Buddha provides us with a strategy to overcome the darkness that is the latent tendencies by working with them in stages in terms of **the 10 mental fetters** (*dasa saṃyojana*) [1.2.1.2].

1.6.6.2 The very first task in the Dharma-based training is to work at breaking the first 3 fetters:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) self-identity view, | <i>sakkāya, diṭṭhi</i> |
| (2) spiritual doubt and | <i>vicikicchā</i> |
| (3) attachment to rituals and vows. | <i>sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa</i> |

The fetter of self-identity view is placed first because the notion of an abiding self—the view that we are unable to change—is the greatest fetter of all. The idea of an unchanging self is an insidious mental setback because it goes against the most basic and universal of the 3 characteristics—impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anattā*).

1.6.6.3 All things change: to exist is to change. It is change that gives meaning to life. When there is change, unsatisfactoriness or suffering naturally follows. What is impermanent and unsatisfactory does not have any abiding essence: this is the meaning of life and existence. But these are not easy ideas to even think about, much less to accept. We imagine or at least hope that what we, consciously or unconsciously, value most—life—being so fragile and short, would last for a long time, even forever.

If the body is perishable, maybe, hopefully, there is an imperishable part of “us”—an immortal soul perhaps. If we desire something that imaginative, surely we must desperately fear death. Then, we must reason, or at least imagine—where this impossible state must come from. It must be a super-being, an external agency—it cannot come from us, since we must die—that created and gave us this eternal soul. This super being must also provide us with a final eternal resting-place, that is, a heaven or paradise.

Such ideas are all rooted in putting ourself at the centre of everything, a self-centred notion. If we have imagined a centre, then there must be peripherals, which are less important than we are. Hence, we build up this self-view by thinking that everything else is there for us. “Since *our* God created us in his image, we are incredibly special and everyone is obliged to do as we tell them: we are, in his name, the master of all we survey.” This is the root of the most insidious idea of our domination of others, the rise of religious wars and bloody politics.

¹⁸² S 2:17, 3:10, 135, 161; A 5:3.

¹⁸³ SA 2:259; NmA 2:310.

¹⁸⁴ On the latent tendencies (*anusaya*), see **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18), SD 6.14 (5).

1.6.6.4 We must simply learn to see beyond the mind-made self, into the mirror of truth, to see that there is no abiding self at all. There is only a series of changing mind-moments that flows through life, and moves on into future lives. If we just permit ourselves to think this way, we will see ourselves as an evolving being: we are capable of learning, growing and, finally, freeing ourselves from the very views that have stunted our hearts and distorted our minds. We have then broken the fetter of **spiritual doubt**—we begin to understand that we *can* and *must* help ourselves to spiritual growth. After all, it is a matter of the mind-heart, how we think and feel, how we allow ourselves to be *free* to think and feel. Religion holds us in the grip of rituals and vows; the Dharma frees us through self-understanding and boundless love.

1.6.6.5 When the fetter of spiritual doubt is broken, we easily go on to break the fetter of **attachment to rituals and vows**. This is the notion that our lack and pain arise, in some way, from outside of us. Thus, we can only remove them by begging or bribing that external source—some almighty beneficent “other”—that seems to control both life and being. This is the basis of all our superstitions, irrational beliefs rooted in fear and ignorance.

This is how we are driven to pray for salvation or some kind of respite, instead of waking up from a nightmare we have created for ourselves. We may have dreams of something or someone almighty, all-loving, all-present and eternal, but in the end we must wake up from that dream to see for ourselves that the “all” is but our own 5 senses and the mind—they are the real actors and true stage for the greatest illusion, a mind-generated virtual reality.¹⁸⁵

1.6.6.6 When we have completely broken free of these 3 fetters, we begin to be truly selfless, self-confident and self-reliant. The “self” here is not a selfish construction around “I,” “me” and “mine,” the notions that project a “Thou” (*twam*) to dominate, or of a “thou” to be dominated by. The “self” here is the mind, the heart, that has found its true place in our life, at peace with ourselves, with others and everything around us. Such a person is the **streamwinner** (*sotāpanna*), the one who has achieved breakthrough into the the oath of awakening. No wonder this is said of a streamwinner:

Better than absolute power over the earth, or even going to heaven,
or lordship over all the worlds, is the blessed fruit of streamwinning. (Dh 178)¹⁸⁶

1.6.6.7 If the streamwinner diligently works further to weaken the 3 unwholesome roots, that is, greed, hate and delusion, he goes on to become a **once-returner** (*sakad-āgāmī*). While the streamwinner has at the most 7 more lives to go, the once-returner, after death, will have only one more birth to clear away the fruits of his past karma, and then attain nirvana.

It should be borne in mind that a single life-time of such a saint, if he is reborn in the higher realms, can be hundreds or thousands of celestial years (which are significantly longer than human years),¹⁸⁷ or up to thousands of world-cycles.¹⁸⁸ Of course, both the streamwinner or the once-returner could—on account of his fivefold growth,¹⁸⁹ that is, faith, moral virtue, Dharma learning, charity and wisdom—choose to be reborn in a human rebirth conducive to his Dharma practice.¹⁹⁰

1.6.6.8 Lay practitioners, as a rule, need to work diligently to attain streamwinning in this life itself. The reason for this is simple enough: if we fail to attain streamwinning in this life, we will surely lose our current human happiness when we are reborn in a less conducive human birth, or worse, in some subhuman realm (as an animal, an asura, a preta or a hell-being).¹⁹¹ Even if we are reborn in a heavenly realm, at the end of that life, we will fall straight into the hell-state (on account of wrong views).¹⁹²

However, if we aspire to streamwinning in this life and follow up with diligently reflecting on the impermanence of things, we will attain streamwinning in this life itself, if not surely at the moment of

¹⁸⁵ On the “all” that is our 6 senses, etc, see **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1

¹⁸⁶ **Dh 178** is quoted at SD 3.3(7), SD 10.16 (1.6.6.6), SD 18.7(4.4), SD 36.10(2.1.3), SD 47.3a(4.2.2).

¹⁸⁷ See, eg, **Pati,pūjika Vatthu** (DhA 4.4), SD 54.25.

¹⁸⁸ For the life-spans in the various realms, see SD 1.7 (Appendix) or DEB Appendix 3.

¹⁸⁹ “Fivefold growth,” *pañca ariya,vaḍḍhi*: see **Vaḍḍhi Ss** (A 5.63+4), SD 3.4 (4).

¹⁹⁰ See esp **Saṅkhār’upapatti S** (M 120), SD 3.4.

¹⁹¹ On the 4 subhuman realms, see SD 2.22 (1.7).

¹⁹² On how, when devas die, they go straight to hell, see (**Nānā,karaṇa**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

death.¹⁹³ After death, as a streamwinner, if we are reborn in a heavenly realm, we continue to prosper there until the time comes for us to attain a higher stage of the path.

1.6.7 Breaking the 5 lower fetters

1.6.7.1 The non-returner (*anāgāmi*) is said to have broken all the 5 lower fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*), that is, the first 3 fetters [1.6.6.2] and the other lower fetters:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) self-identity view, | <i>sakkāya, diṭṭhi</i> |
| (2) spiritual doubt and | <i>vicikicchā</i> |
| (3) attachment to rituals and vows. | <i>sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa</i> |
| (4) sensual lust, and | <i>kāma, rāga</i> |
| (5) repulsion. | <i>paṭigha</i> ¹⁹⁴ |

It is significant that the non-returner has broken a new pair of fetters, the 4th and the 5th—sensual lust and repulsion—which are opposites of one another (simply, they are liking and disliking). Sensual lust means attraction to pleasures of the senses (that is, bodily or carnal pleasures). Where there is sensual lust, ill will is also present as its negative opposite.

It should be noted then the streamwinner is one who has still not overcome this fetter, and still enjoys sensual pleasure (like having a family, or working for a living, or not being celibate), but he does so withing the confines and spirit of the 5 precepts. The non-returner, on the other hand, unlike the streamwinner, is able to attain dhyana. which allows the non-returner to overcome any attraction to the body or to sensual pleasures.

1.6.7.2 The non-returner, then, is one who has cut off all links with the sense-world. Hence, he does not “return” to it (that is, our physical world). He is reborn in the highest of the form realms, called the pure abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*), where he goes into deep meditation to overcome his remaining karmic potential.¹⁹⁵

1.6.8 Breaking the 5 higher fetters

1.6.8.1 Finally, any of these saints—the streamwinner, the once-returner or the non-returner—with proper practice, will be able to break the remaining 5 “higher fetters” (*oram, bhāgiya saṃyojana*), that is,

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| (6) greed for form existence, | <i>rūpa, rāga</i> | |
| (7) greed for formless existence, | <i>arūpa, rāga</i> | |
| (8) conceit, | <i>māna</i> | |
| (9) restlessness and | <i>uddhacca</i> | |
| (10) ignorance. | <i>avijjā</i> | [1.2.1.2] |

1.6.8.2 Although both the streamwinner and the once-returner have overcome the 3 fetters, they may still harbour a desire to be able to attain dhyanas and be reborn in the form realm, or even the formless realm. The non-returner, too, may have some subtle idea that the formless world is more refined, and so is better and more desirable than the form world.

The (Arahatta) Anuruddha Sutta (A 3.128) gives an instructive account of how when Anuruddha complains to Sāriputta that despite his meditation progress, he (Anuruddha) is still unable to gain breakthrough, Sāriputta points out the fetters that still hold Anuruddha back, thus:

“Here, avuso Sāriputta,
I see the thousandfold world with the divine eye, purified and surpassing the human eye.
1.3 Further, I have put forth effort, and established myself in unfailing unconfused
mindfulness, my body is unexcited, bright with faith, the mind is concentrated in oneness.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7, or any of the other 9 suttas in **Okkanta Saṃyutta** (S 25).

¹⁹⁴ In some places, *paṭigha* is replaced by ill will (*vyāpāda*).

¹⁹⁵ On the kinds of non-returners, see **Niṭṭha S** (A 10.63,3), SD 3.3(1.2) & SD 2.17 (4-5). On *suddh’āvāsa*, see SD 1.7 (Appendix) or DEB Appendix 3.

¹⁹⁶ *Āraddham kho pana me viriyam asallīnam upaṭṭhitā sati asammuttā passaddho kāyo asāradhho samāhitam cittam ekaggam.*

1.4 But my mind is not released, through non-clinging, from the influxes.”

2 “Now, avuso Anuruddha, as regards this remark:

‘I see the thousandfold world with the divine eye, purified and superhuman’—
this is due to conceit (*māna*).

2.2 And, avuso Anuruddha, regarding this remark:

‘Moreover, I have put forth effort, established myself in unfailing mindfulness,
unconfused, my body is unexcited, bright with faith, the mind concentrated in oneness’—
this is due to restlessness (*uddhacca*).

2.3 And, avuso Anuruddha, as regards this remark:

‘But my mind is not released, through not clinging, from the influxes’—
this is due to worry (*kukkucca*).

2.4 Avuso Anuruddha, it will be good indeed if the venerable Anuruddha abandon these
three states, not attending to them, but direct the mind to the deathfree element.”¹⁹⁷

(A 3.128,1.2-2.4), SD 19.4

On following Sāriputta’s advice, Anuruddha attains awakening as a full-fledged arhat.

1.6.8.3 The streamwinner, the once-returned and the non-returned—on account of their having attained the path—are all known as “learners” (*sekha*). This means that they are truly able to easily and quickly learn when they hear the Dharma that is properly taught. They may even know when the Dharma is wrongly taught, and yet understand how it should be properly taught, through reflection or reviewing what he has heard or learned.

Hence, learners, despite their spiritual attainments, or even because of their attainments, may still harbour the view that they are better than, say, the worldling. They may even disagree with the ideas of those of lower attainments. However, it is said in **the Saṅgha Bala Sutta** (A 9.5), that they are of the same mind as those of the same level of attainment:

The foremost of **impartiality** (*samān’attatā*),¹⁹⁸ bhikshus, is
that between a streamwinner and a streamwinner,
that between a once-returned and a once-returned,
that between a non-returned and a non-returned,
that between an arhat and an arhat.¹⁹⁹ (A 9.5,6(4)) SD 2.21.

1.6.8.4 A learner, on account of his attainment—like a good scholar of deep and specialized learning, or a great musician, painter, poet or writer of great artistic creativity and sensitivity, deeply aware of their respective fields and abilities—are ever mindful of the truth and beauty of the Dharma. A learner is still capable of feeling “restless” (*uddhacca*) at, say, seeing others lost in their worldliness, or caught up in wrong religious beliefs and practices, or not interested in Dharma practice,

This kind of spiritual unease, however, arises from his wisdom and compassion—like Vimala, -kīrti’s illness, to use a wholesome Mahāyāna figure, who empathized with the sufferings of the world. Hence, it lacks the greed, hate or delusion of the worldling. [14.1.1.5]

1.6.8.5 Finally, the arhat breaks the fetter of ignorance. Here, ignorance refers to not fully understanding the 4 noble truths. **The Dhamma,cakka Pavattana Sutta** (SD 56.11) explains the technicality of this aspect of the arhat in terms of the 3 phases and 12 aspects, thus:

¹⁹⁷ “To the deathfree element,” *amatāya dhātuyā*, ie, nirvana. See **(Dhamma,yogi Jhāyī) Mahā Cunda S** (A 6.46): ... *dullābhā lokasmim ye amataṃ dhātuṃ kāyena phusitvā viharanti* = “... difficult to find in this world are those who dwell personally experiencing the deathless element. (A 6.46,6/3:356), SD 4.6.

¹⁹⁸ Simply, impartiality refers to a “full knowledge” one has of another, ie, an arhat knows another arhat best, or he can know any of the other 3 kinds of saints; and so on. Technically, impartiality refers to the freedom from the 4 biases (*āgati*), ie, greed, hate, delusion and fear (V 1:339; Vism 22.55/683). They are called “motives” (*ihāna*) in **Sigāl’ovāda S** (D 31,5-6/3:182), SD 4.1.

¹⁹⁹ A good example of this impartiality amongst the saints is that of Anuruddha and his companions Nandiya and Kimbila, as recorded in **Upakkilesa S** (M 128), where Anuruddha, after saying that he shows lovingkindness in deed, speech and thought to them, declares to the Buddha: “Bhante, here I think thus: ‘Why should I not set aside what I wish to do and instead do what these venerables wish to do. It seems, bhante, that we are of different bodies but of one mind!’” (M 128,12.1/3:156), SD 5.18 §12a.

(1) That which should be understood

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (a) This is the noble truth that is | <u>suffering</u> . |
| (b) This noble truth | is to be fully understood. |
| (c) This noble truth | has been understood. |

(2) That which should be abandoned

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (a) This is the noble truth that is | the <u>arising</u> of suffering. |
| (b) This noble truth that is the arising of suffering | should be abandoned. |
| (c) This noble truth that is the arising of suffering | has been abandoned. |

(3) That which should be realized

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (a) This is the noble truth that is | the <u>ending</u> of suffering. |
| (b) This noble truth that is the ending of suffering | should be realized. |
| (c) This noble truth that is the ending of suffering | has been realized. |

(4) That which should be cultivated

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| (a) This is the noble truth that is | the <u>path</u> leading to the ending of suffering. |
| (b) This noble truth that is the path ... | should be cultivated. |
| (c) This noble truth that is the path ... | has been cultivated. |

Each of the 4 truths has 3 phases (*ti,parivaṭṭa*), so that altogether there are 12 aspects of the truths, as shown in the above list. This formulation is based on the teaching of the 3 “good truths” (*saddhamma*):

<i>sacca,ñāṇa:</i>	the true teaching as <u>theory</u> (textual learning),	<i>pariyatti saddhamma</i>
<i>kicca,ñāṇa:</i>	the true teaching as <u>practice</u> (moral virtue and mental training/meditation), and	<i>paṭipatti saddhamma</i>
<i>kata,ñāṇa:</i>	the true teaching as <u>realization</u> (wisdom).	<i>paṭivedha saddhamma</i>

(VA 225; AA 5.33; cf Nm 143 where only the first two are listed)

Simply, this refers to the theory (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*) and realization (*paṭivedha*) of the truth. The arhat has fully understood suffering, its arising, its ending and the path in *theory* (as a teaching), in *practice* (as a direct experience), and *realization* (broken through suffering into full awakening).

1.7 THE PATH AS RENUNCIATION**1.7.1 Who walks the path?**

1.7.1.1 In this section, we will examine the following questions: (1) Who walks the eightfold path? (2) How do we walk the eightfold path? The answers to these questions are closely interconnected. However, we will answer these questions in this sequence as the answer to the first question is the basis for understanding the answer to the second question.

1.7.1.2 Who walks the eightfold path? Buddhaghosa gives a fascinating answer in his *Visuddhi,magga*, thus:

<i>Dukkham eva hi na koci dukkhito</i>	Only suffering exists but no sufferer.
<i>kāraṅko na kiriyā va vijjati</i>	There is the doing, but not the doer.
<i>atthi nibbuti na nibbuto pumā</i>	Cooling exists, no cool person is there.
<i>maggam atthi gamako na vijjatīti</i>	There is the path, but no traveller.

(Vism 16.90/513)

This famous answer highlights the non-self (*anattā*) teaching [1.3.1.10], with the focus on conditions (*paccaya*) or conditionality (*paccayatā*), that is to say, only conditions arise and end. We are not entities, but processes that are still evolving. When we cultivate moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom, we *are* the path. This is an inward path of self-discovery, self-understanding and self-liberation, where the word “self” means the mind [1.4.1.2]—the path is essentially the way of personal, mental and spiritual growth ripening in self-awakening. We will return to this famous passage at the end of this section [1.7.3.10].

1.7.1.3 The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10) explains how the focuses of mindfulness (*sati'paṭṭhāna*) should be cultivated, as follows:

“Here, bhikkhus, a monk²⁰⁰ dwells exertive, clearly aware, mindful, **contemplating body in the body**²⁰¹ (contemplating feeling in feeling ... contemplating the mind in the mind ... contemplating dharmas in the dharmas) removing covetousness and displeasure [discontent] in regard to the world²⁰² ... ” (M 10,3), SD 13.3

Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipaṭṭhāna).²⁰³ The Sutta Commentary glosses *bhikkhu* as referring to any individual who practises the Dharma.²⁰⁴ In other words, when we are meditating, while we are striving for mental calm and clarity, we are effectively in a state of a monk or *monkness* (*bhikkhu, bhāva*). [1.7.1.4]

1.7.1.4 Discourses like **the Tevijja Sutta** (D 13), instruct us on how to cultivate lovingkindness, thus:

... a monk, a with heart of **lovingkindness**, dwells suffusing one quarter; so, too, the second; so, too, the third; so, too, the fourth; thus²⁰⁵ above, below, across, everywhere and to everyone as well as to himself, suffusing all the world with a heart of **lovingkindness** ... (and also for compassion, gladness and equanimity).²⁰⁶

Again, “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) here refers to any meditator. Here, “a monk” is not a person, but our action, what we do, our mental state—what we *are*. Even a lay person, properly meditating, attains the state of “*monkness*” (*bhikkhu, bhāva*).²⁰⁷ Of course, a monk or a nun who keeps to the moral training, who meditates and cultivates wisdom, is a true renunciant, who is true and diligent,²⁰⁸ who will be able to progress even faster than any lay practitioner.

1.7.1.5 Note that, in **the Dhānañjāni Sutta** (M 97), the elder Sāriputta teaches the divine abodes to the layman Dhānañjāni, addressing him directly,²⁰⁹ and that in **the (Nānā, karaṇa) Mettā Sutta 1** (A 4.125), the subject of each of the stock passages on the 4 divine abodes is “a certain person” (*ekacco puggalo*), that is, anyone, not just a monastic.²¹⁰ The point is clear then: Dharma practice is for everyone, whether a layman or a monastic. Clearly and naturally, we should begin our practice just the way we are—we start our journey on the eightfold path, *just as we are, right here, right now*.

1.7.2 The open path

1.7.2.1 The “open” spirituality of early Buddhism is seen in how renunciation is presented to the laity through the sutta teachings, often with practising monastics as exemplars. We see, for example, in **the Hālidakāni Sutta 1** (S 22.3), how Mahā Kaccāna teaches **mindfulness as renunciation** to the

²⁰⁰ Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either a monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, esp doing satipaṭṭhāna) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251): see SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5). On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

²⁰¹ “Contemplating body in the body” (*kāye kāyānupassī*). See SD 13.1 (3.4).

²⁰² “World” (*loka*) here refers to the 5 senses and the mind. See SD 13.1 (4.2.4).

²⁰³ DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251: see SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5).

²⁰⁴ *Bhikkhūti paṭipatti, sampādaka, puggala, nidassanam etaṃ* (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251).

²⁰⁵ “Thus,” *iti* (indecl), alt “in this manner.” The word *iti* expands on the previous statement, elaborating on it.

²⁰⁶ See, eg, **Tevijja S** (D 13,76-79), SD 1.8. For a list sutta references to this passage, see SD 38.5 (2.1.3(3)). See also: **D 2**:185, 250, **3**:49, 78, 223; **M 1**:38, 283, 297, 335×2, 351, 369, **2**:76, 77, 78, 81, 195, 207, **3**:146; **S 4**:296, 322, 351, 352×2, **5**:115, 116, 117, 118; **A 1**:183, 192, **2**:172, 175, 184, **3**:225, **4**:390, **5**:299, 343, 344.

²⁰⁷ See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,3A) +n, SD 13.3; SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5); SD 16.7 (1.1.3.2).

²⁰⁸ On diligence (*appamāda*) as the one dharma, see **Pamāda Vihāri S** (S 35.97), SD 47.6; (**Chakka**) **Appamāda S** (A 6.53), SD 42.22; (**Dasaka**) **Appamāda S** (A 10.15), SD 42.23; **Sāra, gandha S** (S 45.143), SD 42.24; **Paṭisallāna S** (It 45), SD 41.4; **Dh 150**, SD 46.15 (2.7.2); SD 46.15 (2.7.2); SD 47.1 (1.1.2.5); SD 47.17 (2.3.4.1).

²⁰⁹ M 97,32.2 (SD 4.9).

²¹⁰ A 4.125,2 etc (SD 33.9).

houcelord Halidakkāni.²¹¹ Haliddakāni is taught how to restrain his senses and to let go of the 5 aggregates.

This teaching itself is based on a **Sutta Nipāta** verse (Sn 844) given in answer by the Buddha to a question asked by another layman, Magandiya, recorded in an ancient text, **the Magandiya Sutta** (Sn 4.9). This is how our study and understanding of the teachings of the early Buddhist suttas joyfully reinforces our Dharma practice whether as a monastic or a lay person—either way we become better renunciants at our own pace.

1.7.2.2 Although we sometimes see the Buddha and the early saints giving mundane teachings to the laity, there are even more suttas that record Dharma teachings, even profound ones, given to the laity. Take, for example, a practice that is often taught to the laity, that is, the divine abodes (*brahma, -vihāra*).

In **the Dhānañjāni Sutta** (M 97), Sāriputta teaches the divine abodes to the layman Dhānañjāni (addressing him directly).²¹² The subject of the passages on each of the divine abodes is a “monk” (*bhikkhu*)—in other words, the monk is taken as an exemplar of proper practice. However, the instruction for the practice itself is addressed to Dhānañjāni (a layman) himself. In fact, as a result of his practice, Dhānañjāni is reborn in the brahma world.

In **the (Nānā,kaṛaṇa) Mettā Sutta 1** (A 4.125), too, the subject of each of the stock passages on the 4 divine abodes is “a certain person” (*ekacco puggalo*).²¹³ In the usual stock passage, the subject is usually “a monk” (*bhikkhu*). Even then, as we have noted [1.7.1.3], “monk” refers to anyone who is properly meditating.

1.7.3 How do we walk the path?

1.7.3.1 The eightfold path is a gradual path: it gently moves upward, often in a spiral when we follow it rightly. The very first thing we should do to walk the eightfold path is to ensure that we have habits that keep us healthy and happy, just as the Buddha has done just before the great awakening.²¹⁴ The basic rule of the path, then, is a healthy body for a healthy mind.

Next, we should make an effort to understand the nature of the precepts—at least the 5 precepts—regarding why and how we practise them. The precepts are the rules of a happy worldly life—just as the rules of a game (such as football) or a sport (such as archery) define the game, and makes it fun, meaningful and purposeful.

1.7.3.2 In terms of the eightfold path, we need to diligently work on *right speech, right action and right livelihood*. We should learn to communicate with others in a truthful, friendly, unifying and helpful way. Our actions should be brightened, inspired, by charity, friendliness and compassion. Our livelihoods should not harm ourself, others or the environment, and should keep to the spirit of the 5 precepts.²¹⁵

To empower ourself to keep the precepts, we need to regularly cultivate **lovingkindness**, so that we are happy and friendly. When we are happy, it is easier to keep the precepts. When the precepts are well kept, it makes it easier for us to cultivate our mind. In fact, most of our efforts in walking the eightfold path will be invested in mental cultivation, which is what we will now turn to.

1.7.3.3 Properly practised, **meditation is a progressive renunciation**. Before we begin to actually meditate, we need to find a quiet and conducive time or place, and then we sit down in a comfortable posture so that we are alert during the practice. Then, we shut our eyes so that we do not need to process sight; we may hear sounds but, after seeing them for what they really are, we let them go; so, too, with sensations in our body and the rest of our senses, as well as our speech: we gently and happily let them all go.

When we make serious efforts to meditate, we will, in time, effectively reach the state of a true renunciant. The very first effort in meditation is to find a conducive place and sit as comfortably as we can so that we can forget about our body or our status as a lay person or a monastic, and just practise.

²¹¹ S 22.3/3:9-12 (SD 10.12); *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

²¹² M 97,32.2 (SD 4.9).

²¹³ A 4.125,2 etc (SD 33.9).

²¹⁴ **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31-33), SD 49.4.

²¹⁵ See **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (esp 2.2).

This is a **renunciation of the body**. Note that even while we are doing this, we are also keeping to the precepts [1.2.1.5(5)]—this, in short, is our moral training, the first stage of the eightfold path.

1.7.3.4 After sitting for some time, we may begin to feel some discomfort. We should simply ignore it if possible. Otherwise, we try to observe it with an open mind, “What is this pain?” We will notice that it is a process of rising and falling of feeling. If we do not let our negative mind return and colour up the pain, then, this is a renunciation of feeling, which is a part of the renunciation of the body.

1.7.3.5 Often, during our meditation, even after we are physically comfortable, we may notice that there are some (maybe a lot of) thoughts going through our mind. The first step is to simply ignore them, not to follow them or to “feed” them. Often, this is easily done when we simply “smile” them away, or mentally say, “Let go ... Let go ... ” just a couple of times. Smile again. Then, we, at once return to focus on the meditation-object.

When we have calmed our body down, making it so comfortable that we do not have to think about it any more, we go on to direct our attention to the meditation-object, say, the breath or loving-kindness. Whenever we notice thoughts in our mind, we just smile at them, or label them, “Thinking ... thinking ...,” let them go, and return to our meditation-object.

If thoughts continue to arise, it is best to simply let them come and let them go. Try not to follow or feed them. We can simply watch how these thoughts arise and end. If we have learned some sutta teachings, then we understand how these thoughts are *not* “present” at all, but always about the past or the future. We notice that even these thoughts are impermanent. If we can do this comfortably over time, then this is a **renunciation of the mind**.

1.7.3.6 As our meditation progresses, we notice that our body feels really light, or as if even not there. We may even feel really peaceful, joyful and a sense of brightness. If the mental brightness seems to fill our whole mind, then, this is probably what is known as “the sign” (*nimitta*).²¹⁶ This sort of feeling or experience, if it is truly blissful, should be silently enjoyed for as long as we like. When we feel some sense of familiarity with it, then, it is time to let it go gently, so that a higher state would arise. This is a **higher renunciation**.

1.7.3.7 Then, comes the most vital stage in our meditation practice. Actually, this is not really a stage, but rather, the result of our meditation. Often, we can feel mental peace and heartfelt joy even as we meditate and for some time after that. The more regularly we keep up our meditation, the more we enjoy it and know when to let it go.

The more we learn, at the right time, to **let go** of even the most wonderful or beautiful states in our meditation, the more we will progress in it. We grow from joy to greater joy, from peace to more profound peace. Our mind becomes clearer, we are happier, and we find it easier to study and understand the suttas and Dharma in general. All this helps us see our whole life in proper perspective—we now know well what we want to do with our life. This is **the renunciation of worldliness** or spiritual renunciation.

1.7.3.8 Finally, when we are fully free of bodily sensations, thoughts and feelings, we might go on to attain deep concentration, even dhyana. Then, whether we are monastic or lay, we have truly “renounced the world.” This is **true renunciation**.²¹⁷ True renunciation is not a ritual, such as the way we dress or look, but how we really conduct ourself, with a mind and heart that has let go of worldly desires and attachments. This can happen in our meditation, or better as a true commitment to being a good monk or good nun as a full-time renunciant—then, our journey on the path is more comfortable and even faster.

1.7.3.9 At any stage in our meditation as renunciation, especially at the end of the session, during the review period, we should also reflect on the impermanence of our meditation (whatever we experience during our practice). We should also reflect on the impermanent nature of whatever we notice

²¹⁶ This term—the “sign” (*nimitta*)—is more often applied to the meditation object itself, esp when it begins to joyfully brighten up. See *Nimitta*, SD 19.7.

²¹⁷ For a fuller reflection, see “Truly renouncing” (R226, Reflection 120208): see <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/72-Truly-renouncing-120208.pdf>.

around us in the joyful clarity of our contemplative mind. This is **the perception of impermanence**, which is a basis for the attaining of streamwinning in this life itself.²¹⁸

1.7.3.10 Although we speak of the eightfold “path,” it is vital to understand that the path is primarily presented in the suttas, not merely as a *means* to the destination, nirvana. If this were the case, we might misconstrue that the end justifies the means, and misconceive the notion that we can modify the path, or even cut a new road or huge highway, or some superhighway as a shortcut to the destination. We, in fact, can see this arising in various forms in later Buddhism.

The spirit of the eightfold path is in its journey; the destination merely marks its joyful restful end. It is the journey that we must each take. This path (*magga*) is a going (*āyana*) for only one, a means of progress (*paṭipadā*)—of *how* we go (the now), rather than *where* we arrive (the future). This becomes crystal clear when we understand that the path is an inner journey taken by the mind. In moving on, our mind grows, evolves and changes into a most noble being even while we still live, and the most noble state after that.

1.7.3.11 In this sense, the noble eightfold path is an ancient path through the world and its deserts, jungles and wildernesses. More so, it is a path for the ancients, the noble saints, whose path spiral up into the bright sky and open space of nirvana. But these are merely words for the unawakened—the path of awakening is more like that of a shooting-star that gloriously cuts a light across heaven’s night and then is seen no more [5.6.2]. In this sense, there is the path, but *no* traveller on it. [1.7.1.2]

Then, we begin to understand, in due course, that there is *no* path to happiness either—happiness itself is the path. If we are still unawakened (if you think you are, you’re *not!*), then, it is wise to work on understanding *why the precept against killing is put first*—work to understand this, and our journey has begun [5.1.2.4].

1.7.4 Emotional independence

1.7.4.1 If we patiently bear the initial pains during our meditation, the fruits will come in due course. Good meditation begins by a total acceptance of ourself just as we are. Then, we leave the past where it should be, and we do not cross the bridge of the future until we reach it. We need to renounce the past (leave the dead buried), and postpone any desire to jump into the future as it is not the right time.

1.7.4.2 In meditation, we should gently but firmly keep bringing our mind back to the meditation-object. Then, we keep on extending the horizon of our lovingkindness. We are laying the foundations of emotional strength, making it easier for us to keep the precepts and cultivate moral virtue.

1.7.4.3 As our inner happiness grows, we become less worldly, we need even less religion or none at all, we certainly don’t need blind faith. We no more need a parent-figure or a guru-figure or any kind of power-figure. We don’t need the attention or approval of others. We don’t need the crowd to blow our ego balloon. Our locus of control stays within us: we are now more emotionally self-reliant, without any need for any measuring ourself against others. We are cultivating our true self.²¹⁹

The individual path-factors

1.8 Right view (*sammā,saṅkappa; Skt samyak,drṣṭi*)

1.8.1 Significance of right view

1.8.1.1 “Right view” is the first factor of the eightfold path, as it is a factor of fundamental significance in early Buddhism. Almost echoing **the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 177,34) [1.2.2.1], **the Pubbaṅgama Sutta** (A 10.121) explains why right view comes first, and how it conditions the other path-factors:

²¹⁸ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7. On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/-3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

²¹⁹ See SD 17.8c: (8.2) Downside of meditation (the danger of cults); (8.3) Who should not meditate.

SD 10.16(1.8)**Pubbaṅgama Sutta**

The Forerunner Discourse | A 10.121/5:236 f

Traditional: A 10.3.2.9 = Aṅguttara 10, Tika Nipāta 3, Tatiya Paṇṇāsaka 2, Paccorohaṇī Vagga 9

Theme: Why right view comes first

Bhikshus, just as there is this forerunner, this precursor to sunrise, that is, the break of dawn,²²⁰ so, too, there is this forerunner, this precursor of wholesome qualities, that is, right view.

For one of right view,	there arises right intention.
For one of right intention,	there arises right speech.
For one of right speech,	there arises right action.
For one of right action,	there arises right livelihood.
For one of right livelihood,	there arises right effort.
For one of right effort,	there arises right mindfulness.
For one of right mindfulness,	there arises right concentration. [237]
For one of right concentration,	there arises right knowledge.
For one of right knowledge,	there arises right freedom.

— evaṃ —

1.8.1.2 The Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 141) defines “right view” as simply a “knowledge” (*ñāṇa*), that is, a full understanding, of the 4 noble truths, as follows:

... it is the knowledge²²¹ of suffering,
 the knowledge of the arising of suffering,
 the knowledge of the ending of suffering,
 and the knowledge of the way leading to the ending of suffering. (M 141,24), SD 11.11

We have already discussed how these 4 truths are fully understood by the arhat by way of its 4 phases and 12 aspects [1.6.8.5]. This is, of course, the right view of the arhat. As we shall see in the following section, there is also the view of the unawakened.

1.8.2 Two kinds of right views

1.8.2.1 Just as there are two kinds of eightfold path: the mundane (*lokiya*) and the supramundane (*lok’uttara*) [1.2.1.2], right view (and the other factors), too, is of two kinds. Here is the primary passage in **the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 177) defining right view, as follows:

6 And what, bhikshus, is **right view**?

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right view, I say.

Bhikshus, there is the right view with influxes,²²² partaking of merit,²²³ ripening in birth-bases²²⁴ [acquisition of aggregates].²²⁵

Bhikshus, there is the right view that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor.²²⁶

²²⁰ *Suriyassa bhikkhave udayato etaṃ pubbaṅgamaṃ etaṃ pubba, nimittam yad idaṃ aruṇ’aggam.*

²²¹ *Ñāṇa.*

²²² “With influxes,” *s’āsava = sa + āsava*. See (1.6.1.5) & also M 117,13 n & SD 6.10 (4) n.

²²³ “Partaking of merit,” *puñña, bhāgiya*, lit, “having a share of merit,” or “concerned with merit” (Gethin 2001: 216).

²²⁴ “Birth-bases,” *upadhi*, lit, “that on which something is laid or rests, bases, foundation, substratum.” See SD 6.10 (4) n.

²²⁵ “With influxes, ... in the form of birth-bases [acquisition of aggregates],” *s’āsavā puñña, bhāgiyā upadhi, ve-pakkā*. See SD 6.10 (4) n.

²²⁶ “Of the noble ones, ... a path-factor,” *ariyā anāsavā lokuttarā magg’angā*. This is another Abhidhamma and commentarial term, reflecting the idea that the path is only a moment (*khaṇa*), ie, when any of the 4 stages of sainthood is attained. See Analayo 2014:134.

7 And what, bhikshus, is **the right view** *with influxes*, partaking of merit, ripening in birth-bases?

It is the view that

‘There is what is given, what is offered, what is sacrificed.

There is fruit and result of good or bad actions.

There is this world, the next world.

There is mother, there is father.

There are beings reborn.

There are brahmins and recluses who, living rightly and practising rightly, having directly known and realized for themselves this world and the hereafter, proclaim them²²⁷ —

this, bhikshus, is the right view with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in birth-bases.

8 And, bhikshus, what is **the right view that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor?

It is the wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the awakening-factor of dharma-discernment,²²⁸ the right view as a path-factor, of one whose mind is noble, whose mind is without influxes, conversant with the noble path,²²⁹ cultivating the noble path²³⁰ —

this, bhikshus, is the right view that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor.

9 One who makes an effort to give up wrong view, to cultivate right view—this is one’s right effort.

One who is mindful gives up wrong view and dwells cultivating right view—this is one’s right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right view, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.²³¹ (M 177,6-9) SD 6.10

1.8.2.2 For the unawakened practitioner, then, right view is that of seeing things rightly, as they really are: that there is goodness and its fruit, and that we are capable of good, of profound good, that finally frees us from what has blinded and misled us all our lives. Such right view entails right effort and right mindfulness. This is a journey we must make: this means that we must put forth effort and energy, and we must be mindful of where we are as we move, so that we are not lost, and of how we are progressing, so that we move on ever more happily and healthily towards the journey’s end.

1.8.3 Wrong views

²²⁷ This para, on right view regarding karma, is also found in **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,14/1:288) & **Kusalākusala Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,10/5:296). Cf Vbh 328, VbhA 415. See **Rebirth in early Buddhism**, SD 57.1 (2).

²²⁸ “Dharma-discernment,” *dhamma, vicaya*, lit, “taking apart of dharmas (mental and physical states),” also tr as “discrimination of dharmas.” Sometimes this is taken as “investigation of the Doctrine”, but the meaning here actually is “investigation of bodily and mental phenomena” (Walshe 1995n690). Both Edgerton (BHSD) & Gethin, however, call into question the tr of *vicaya* here as “investigation” (Gethin 2001:152 n38). Awakening does not comprise in the assemblage of the 7 factors, but just one, namely, *dhamma, vicaya sambojjhaṅga* (Nm 456). This is the key awakening-factor, that is, “awakening” itself, while the others are the “factors” that help this awakening to be realized (Nm 456). **Milinda, pañha** compares *dhamma, vicaya sambojjhaṅga* to a sword, which in order to cut needs the use of the hands (representing the other 5 factors) (Miln 83). See Gethin 2001: 147 f, 152-154, 185.

²²⁹ “Conversant with the noble path,” *ariya, maggassa samaṅgī* (also M 3:73), lit, “endowed with the noble path.” Here I follow I B Horner (M:H 3:115). CPD says this is a wrong reading. Variant reading at M 3:74, 75, is *ariya, magga, samaṅgino*. Cf Pug 10, 73: *magga, samaṅgino*.

²³⁰ Supramundane right view here is taken as wisdom that is a faculty, power, awakening-factor and path-factor. “This definition is formulated by way of the cognitive function rather than the objective content of right view” (M:ÑB 1327 n1103). Right view is usually def as the knowledge of the 4 noble truths (eg, **Sacca Vibh-aṅga S**, M 141,24/3:251). In other words, an intellectual or conceptual understanding of the noble truths is mundane right view, while the direct knowledge of the truth by realizing nirvana is supramundane right view.

²³¹ Comy: The three accompany right view as co-existents (*saha, jātā*) and precursors (*pure, jātā*). Right effort and right mindfulness are co-existent with supramundane right view. The right view of insight is the precursor of supramundane right view. (MA 4:132)

1.8.3.1 Buddhism (like all other religions) is mostly wrong views (our views), and it still exists for this reason—as long as we have views, there is Buddhism. If we are already awakened, we do not need Buddhism—just as the Buddha or the arhats do not need Buddhism or any other “ism” or *yāna* (“vehicle,” also meaning “-ism”) that we see today. And for that same reason we need to deal with our own wrong views. Like **a lotus in the mud**, we must recognize the mud that has held us, and given us some strength—so it seems. But the true strength comes from the very nature that we are lotuses, capable of benefitting from the mud.

Then, we need to rise from the mud, through the dark waters of our daily karma—working to cultivate and beautify our body, speech and mind—and learning from the life and the suttas what the true Dharma is all about. It helps to see this life as a progressive renunciation. Just as we must void our waste daily or periodically, one of our key Dharma tasks is to understand our own wrong views and free them—just as we free birds and beings on Vesak Day, but this is even better because we learn more from this by being compassionate and amenable to the historical Buddha’s teachings.

1.8.3.2 On a worldly level, mundane right view is what sets the true follower apart from the false follower; on a supramundane level, it is what defines a saint, setting him apart from all worldlings. Even at the start, it helps to innovatively speak of the 3 levels of views, those of having views (plural), have a view (singular) of things, and havin no view (that is, free from views).

As good worldlings (*kalyāṇa outhujjana*), our task is to cultivate *right views*. When we view, we work to see them as being conditioned and impermanent. The learners of the path (the streamwinner, the once-returned and the non-returned) cultivate *right view*: we know it is conditioned and impermanent. Only the Buddha and the arhats have *no view*.

On a worldly level, right views work in direct opposition to **wrong views** (*micchā, diṭṭhi*), correcting them. Their respective roles cannot be different. Right views lead to the eightfold path and on to awakening. Wrong views drug us with hate, drown us with delusion and drag us down the path deeper into suffering. Nothing conduces more to a lower rebirth than our wrong view (A 1.17.7).²³²

1.8.3.3 Like those of “hidden actions” (*paṭicchanna kammanta*),²³³ those with wrong views (*micchā, diṭṭhika*) have one of only two destinies: either the animal realm or hell (A 1.3.7-8/1:60). However, even when we have fallen to the lowest level of bad deeds, such as the serial killer, Aṅgulimāla, there is still hope of turning oneself around—if we find some way of correcting or preventing that bad deed from continuing. When the monks ask the Buddha how is it that Aṅgulimāla, an erstwhile murderer, is able to become an arhat [5.5.5], the Buddha replies:

<i>Yassa pāpam kataṃ kammaṃ</i>	Whoever by good obstructs	
<i>kusalena pithīyati</i>	a bad karma that was done—	
<i>so imaṃ lokaṃ pabhāseti</i>	he brightens the world	
<i>abbhā mutto’va candimā</i>	like a cloud-free moon.	(Dh 173)

1.8.4 The karmic fruits of wrong views

1.8.4.1 Such an understanding of right view—even on a theoretical level—inspires us to take full responsibility for all our actions through all the 3 doors, body, speech and mind. This self-accountability is based on an understanding and acceptance—“wise faith” (*avecca-p, pasāda*)—of the truths of **karma** and **rebirth**, the possibility of goodness in oneself and others—and our need for awakening in this life itself.

1.8.4.2 On a worldly level (when we are still unawakened), we need to be diligent in trying to understand **the 4 noble truths**, at least in theory (*pariyatti*), that is, learning about them from all the suttas and Dharma-based teachings. This theoretical level of understanding of the 4 truths is rooted in

²³² For def & details of wrong views, see SD 40a.1 (5.1.2).

²³³ See, eg, **Dāru-k, khandha S 1** (S 35.241), where he is described as being “immoral, evil by nature, impure, of suspicious conduct, given to hidden deeds, a false ascetic claiming to be an ascetic, not celibate, claiming to be celibate [a brahmachari], rotten internally [rotten to the core], drenched in lust, filthy” (S 35.241, 12), SD 28.5; also UA 297.

the acceptance of the universal truth of impermanence, whether by faith or through wisdom (depending on our spiritual faculty).²³⁴

1.8.4.3 According to **the (Sāla,vatikā) Lohicca Sutta** (D 12, “For one with wrong view, Lohicca, there is either of two destinies, I say, that is, hell or the animal womb.”)²³⁵ The hell-state is full of violent sufferings; the animal world is an existence overwhelmed by gullibility and fear.²³⁶

In **the Kukkura,vatika Sutta** (M 57), the Buddha tells **Puṇṇa**, a cow-vow ascetic (who dresses and behaves as a cow), and **Seṇiya**, a dog-vow ascetic (behaving in a dog-like manner) that, if they succeed in their practices, they will be reborn respectively as a cow and a dog. But if they fail in it, they will be reborn in a hell-state.

1.8.4.4 In **the (Ananda) Subha Sutta** (D 10), the Buddha declares:

‘These beings—who were endowed with bad conduct of body, speech, and mind,
who reviled the noble ones,
held wrong views and
undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—
after death, with the body’s breaking up,
have re-arisen in a plane of misery, a bad destination, a lower realm, in hell.

(D 10,2.33.2), SD 40.13

In the case of someone who habitually holds wrong views, such as misrepresenting the Buddha, his saint disciples, or his teachings, if they do not give up their wrong views, they will be reborn as animals. However, if they succeed in spreading their wrong views so that others would believe them, then, he will be reborn in a hell-state.²³⁷

1.8.4.5 Wrong views powerfully shape how we think, speak and act, which, in turn, profoundly shape our karma. Although merits (*puñña*) play a decisive role in bringing us a happy birth, our moral virtue, too, shapes how we live that life. **The Saddha Jāṇussoṇi Sutta** (A 10.177), for example, tells us that if we habitually perform acts of merit, such as practising generosity or doing good work and social services, but we do not keep the precepts, whether as a monastic or as a layperson, then, says the Sutta, we will be reborn in the animal world as animals or pets that are well cared for!²³⁸

Our habitual lack of moral conduct brings us rebirth as an animal, but the merits we have done bring us comfort as beloved pets of others. Every act of merit, such as giving, is never lost, but will beautify our future lives, but how we will enjoy such good karma also depends on the moral virtues that shapes us. Hence, even if we do admirable social work and accumulate great merits, we still need to keep to the precepts and cultivate moral virtue.

1.8.4.6 The point is clear: there is no external agency that judges us, punishing us with hell or rewarding us with heaven. It is our own deliberate acts, our karma that create such commensurate states for us. Heaven and hell are mental states, just as being human is a mental state, too, even when we do have a human body.²³⁹

When we are caught up with a view, it closes up our mind so that we are unable to see beyond our views. It is like wearing coloured lenses, and all we see is one colour, we are convinced that the colour we see is what *others* see, too, or *should* see, too! Hence, our mind has fallen into a rut of habitually narrow thinking, fear, ferocity and predictability—our mind has become that of **an animal**.

And when we zealously work to convince others of our view, and they, too, believe us, and uphold that view (such a view is, by definition, unwholesome). Such believers will then defend their teacher’s greatness or “honour,” and show scorn, ill will and other negative emotions towards those who reject

²³⁴ This is either the faculty of faith (*saddh’indriya*) or of wisdom (*paññ’indriya*): see **Pañc’indriya**, SD 10.4. On **the streamwinner’s faith**, see SD 3.3 (5). See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

²³⁵ *Micchā,ditṭhissa kho ahaṃ, lohicca, dvinnam gatīnam aññataram gatim vadāmi: nirayam vā tiracchāna,-yonim vā, D 12,10+11+13.2+14+15.2 & SD 34.8 (4); also M 57,3+5 & SD 23.11 (1.1.2).*

²³⁶ The knowledge of such painful destinies is known through **the divine eye**: D 10,2.33.2 (SD 40.13).

²³⁷ Comy says that those with wrong views will be reborn as animals. Teachers teaching wrong views will end up as hell-wardens (*niraya,pāla*) and their followers as hell-beings, and so on (MA 2:13 f).

²³⁸ A 10.177,10-25 (SD 2.6a).

²³⁹ On our **being born with only a human body**, but the human mind needs to be cultivated, see SD 21.6 (1.2.2); SD 38.4 (4.4).

the teacher and his view. The believers may even go to the extent of showing violence to those they perceive as unbelievers and do not accept their views. These are the karmic conditions that encourage violence, which characterizes **the hell states**.²⁴⁰

1.8.5 Safe bets

1.8.5.1 The best way to learn the Dharma is to practise it—that means to examine the various teachings and see whether they are good and true, and really work to make us “unreasonably” happy so that we naturally let go of wrong and unhelpful ways. If we have been hurt by bad teachings and worse teachers, we may be more suspicious even of what is really good and true in the Dharma.

Or, if we are new and eager followers, we may easily fall for all the false teachings and fake gurus who are only skin-deep but pocket-deep into religion. We are merely gullible customers for a lucrative market of blessings, meditation and easy answers to hard problems. The first safe bet, then, is to only trust ourself with the suttas and our own practice: *nothing outside is worth clinging to*—remember the Buddha’s advice to Moggallāna. [1.4.3.1]

1.8.5.2 The Apaṇṇaka Sutta (M 60) is a classic work on safe bets on the Dharma. Please read the Sutta carefully to benefit fully from it. Here, we will look at only two key “problem” teachings which can test some of our most dedicated Buddhist practitioners—karma and rebirth. As unawakened Buddhists, it is very difficult for us to verify them; they are at best only *right “views”* for us. It’s wise to be careful and honest not to claim we know for sure about them when we lack any direct experience of them.

Yet, to prevent this from becoming a fetter of doubt—which prevents us from attaining even streamwinning in this life—we simply need to test the pudding by eating it. The Buddha’s “wager” is simple enough: if karma and rebirth are *false*, we have nothing to lose by accepting them when we have done nothing wrong. On the other hand, if we reject karma and rebirth, and they are *true*, then we have a lot to lose, even when we have done other good deeds. The wrong view will prevent us from benefitting from the full goodness of the good that we have done. The point is that even some trust (*vissāsa*) in the potential goodness of such teachings is a great help to our spiritual lives.²⁴¹

1.8.6 Rightly diligent

1.8.6.1 Right view, even on a *worldly* level—especially on a worldly level—should be the ability and willingness to differentiate between right and wrong manifestations of the path-factors. This is best done with the support of the monitoring qualities of right mindfulness and right effort. Mindfulness is diligence in carefully examining what purports to be Dharma. Right effort is essentially rejecting of the false teachings and wrong ways, and cultivating what is right and good.

1.8.6.2 What is to be rejected here? **The Buddhism of greed** should be rejected. All organized affairs—including Buddhist ones—need funds to run, and their organizers need basic life supports—unless they are the leisurely wealthy who have dedicated their wealth and time to spread the Dharma. However, when Buddhism is only a means, even a subtle and noble one, to raise funds, especially by those who claim “not to use or have need of money,” it is better for us to politely retreat into our own sutta study and meditation.

1.8.6.3 The Buddhism of hate shows itself mostly when organized Buddhists or some over-zealous monastic or priest forget their vows and training to take a violent stand on some political issues.²⁴² The task of Buddhist leaders, monastic or lay, is to promote dialogue and understanding with those of other faiths or leanings. This is becoming more difficult in a world with greater mobility and easier communication. But this does not mean we should take the simplistic Procrustean way out. This is the kind of Buddhism we need to avoid.

1.8.6.4 The Buddhism of delusion is difficult to detect if we are already self-deluded by its teachings. This delusion may be in the form of the superiority or priority of a race, or the preservation

²⁴⁰ See SD 34.8 (3), “Hell or animal womb.”

²⁴¹ See M 60 @ SD 35.5 (4).

²⁴² Such negative examples incl the stand taken by some worldly monks against the Tamils in Sri Lanka (1980s), and the violent rhetoric of certain radical monks against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar (2012). See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism_and_violence.

of a culture or sectarianism,²⁴³ or even some modernist notion of Buddhism that “Buddhism needs change,” when the real issue is our desire to promote some worldly schemes. The real task is not to change Buddhism, but to better ourselves.

1.8.7 Reject bad, promote good

1.8.7.1 Both the **Sammā Diṭṭhi Sutta** (M 9) and the **Dvedhā Vitakka Sutta** (M 19) highlight the fact that right view is cultivated and enhanced by the recognition of what is wholesome or what is unwholesome by seeing them for what they really are. What is unwholesome produces suffering of some kind, often in subtle ways, even in deceptive ways by appearing to be good and helpful. By the time the scam or rot is discovered (if it is discovered at all) may simply be too late.²⁴⁴

1.8.7.2 A rule of thumb is that whatever is person-centred is neither likely to last nor to present the Dharma of the suttas. We are often warned against personality cults and religious fan clubs. **The (Ahiṭa) Thera Sutta** (A 5.88) warns us that even elderly, famous, learned, successful and respected monks can have wrong views.²⁴⁵ **The Rūpa Sutta** (A 4.65) advises us not to judge a person, especially a monastic or a teacher by his looks, voice, austerity or even teachings. We should carefully observe whether he has moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom, and to accept and follow him only if he is truly wholesome.²⁴⁶

1.8.7.3 **The Puggala-p, pasāda Sutta** (A 5.250) speaks of the dangers of one’s being devoted to a single teacher, that is, being caught up in a personality cult or hero worshipping him.²⁴⁷ Instead, we should learn whatever wholesome teachings we can from a teacher, show him due respect, but also give the Dharma its due respect, and place the teaching above the teacher.²⁴⁸ This is called “respect for the Dharma” (*dhamma, gāravatā*), as beautifully demonstrated by the Buddha himself in **the Gārava Sutta** (S 6.1), where he declares that even the Dharma is above him and that he respects the Dharma.²⁴⁹

1.8.7.4 Our ability to recognize what is really wholesome and our willingness to accept it into our lives conduces to greater freedom from suffering. This diligence in pruning the Bodhi tree and debugging it helps to strengthen the foundation and facility of the path. If the crowd on the path is going the wrong way, we need to move away and go on our own. We should not be deceived into being led by another traveller with his glib travel talks or taken for a ride in his grand vehicle, when the path is wide and clear, and we ourselves know where we are going. It is of course a common joy and safe comfort to be able to travel with other like-hearted walking the same way.

1.8.7.5 As unawakened practitioners of the eightfold path, we need to firmly stand on the “grounds of merit-making” (*puñña, kiriya, vatthu*). These are key qualities that a worldling should cultivate to promote right view, that is, to practise giving (*dāna*), moral discipline (*sīla*) and mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*).²⁵⁰ Generous giving is an expression of unconditional acceptance of others, and a great way to make and keep loving friends. The joy of giving helps us nurture moral discipline, which, in turn, hones us to more easily and happily experience and share the best of our actions and speech. Both—the joy of giving and of moral discipline—conduce to mental cultivation, which, in turn, helps us to cultivate right view.

²⁴³ Ethnic Buddhisms are historically important, but mostly in a worldly way; they are generally beneficial to their own adherents and culture, but to truly progress Dharma-wise, they need to happily give priority to the Buddha Dharma over racism and ethnicism; in fact, it is better to avoid them altogether.

²⁴⁴ Respectively, M 9 (SD 11.14) & M 19 (SD 61.1).

²⁴⁵ A 5.88 (SD 40a.16).

²⁴⁶ See also **Vīmaṅsaka S** (M 47), SD 35.6, where the Buddha says that these same measures should be applied even to the himself.

²⁴⁷ A 5.250 (SD 3.14(9)).

²⁴⁸ See **The teacher or the teaching?** SD 3.14.

²⁴⁹ S 6.2, almost identical with **Uruvelā S 1** (A 4.21/2:20 f) + SD 12.3 (2) The teaching is above the teacher.

²⁵⁰ D 33,1.10(38)/3:218. More fully, these are the grounds for merit-making based on (1) giving (*dāna, maya puñña, kiriya, vatthu*), (2) moral virtue (*sīla, maya puñña, kiriya, vatthu*) and (3) mental cultivation (*bhāvanā, maya puñña, kiriya, vatthu*). See **Puñña, kiriya, vatthu S** (A 8.36), SD 22.17. At **Mā Puñña Bhāyī S** (It 22), they are called (1) giving (*dāna*), (2) taming (*tama*) [equivalent to *bhavanā*] and (3) restraint (*saññama*) [equivalent to *sīla*] (It 22), SD 2.11b.

1.8.8 Directly seeing

1.8.8.1 The key reason that we have views is because we are unable to directly see true reality even when it confronts us. When someone dies, for example, we rarely ever actually see the decaying process of the remains. The deceased is made up to look almost alive and our language of denial does the rest: “He is going to a better place,” “He is with God,” and so on.

Even when we make an effort to see some reality, we only look at one aspect or angle of it, like looking at one side of a mountain. This may not be so bad if we accept the reality that there are other aspects and angles of that mountain we have not even seen. However, we tend to think, even demand, that *our* view is the only right one. The parable of the blind man and the elephant is instructive here.²⁵¹

1.8.8.2 The Aṭṭhaka Vagga of the Sutta Nipāta, one of the most ancient sections of the whole Pali canon presents right view as the ability to identify attachment as leading to the arising of suffering. Hence, many suttas there speak of going beyond views, that is, to leave behind all views by letting go of dogmatic adherence and non-attachment to any views. See especially the following discourses:

Kalaha,vivāda Sutta	Sn 4.11	quarrels arise from views
Cūḷa Viyūha Sutta	Sn 4.12	the wise have given up views
Mahā Viyūha Sutta	Sn 4.13	the wise are neither dogmatic nor stuck in views

1.8.8.3 Non-attachment to views does not mean to summarily reject *all* views. Then, that notion, too, is *a* view!—as the Buddha points out to Dīgha,nakha at the start of **the Dīgha,nakha Sutta** (M 74,2).²⁵² Right view, in fact, is still useful as the insight into true reality and is not discarded, as it is the forerunner of the whole of awakening.

Even when the saints have given up “views,” they continue to have right view (singular): they still see what is right. Yet, even when they see only a part of it, they understand and envision the whole picture. The saints, still having right view (of the supermundane kind), can be easily inferred from the closing verse of **the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta** (Sn 1.8), which recommends “not going into views” (*diṭṭhiṃ ca anupagamma*), yet “being endowed with vision” (*dassanena sampanno*) (Sn 152). Here, “vision” means rightly seeing things, right view.

1.8.8.4 In **the Aggi Vaccha,gotta Sutta** (M 72), too, the Buddha says that he has put aside all views (*diṭṭhi*), having seen (*diṭṭha*) for himself the impermanent nature of the 5 aggregates [1.3.1.6].²⁵³ Here and in the Karaṇīya Metta Sutta before this, there is a play on the root √DRŚ, “to see.” In *diṭṭhi*, the stress is on the seeing only a part or misperceiving, whereas in *dassana*, the stress is on direct seeing into true reality as a complete experience. In other words, right view is the vision won through deep insight that “sees through” all views.

1.8.8.5 On a supramundane level, the 4 noble truths are not different from right view. The arhat has full insight into views, their arising, the way to their ending, and their ending itself. This is the sequence of truths in the actual *experience* of insight.²⁵⁴ This is the vision that brings freedom from suffering, as stated in **the Avyākata Sutta** (A 7.51).²⁵⁵ This is how the 4 noble truths work as right view—they lead to revulsion, peace, direct knowledge and nirvana, as stated in **the Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,-putta Sutta** (M 63).²⁵⁶

1.8.8.6 The Kaccāna,gotta Sutta (S 12.15) gives us important clues into the nature of supramundane right view. On the supramundane or “noble” level, right view takes the form of right vision, of seeing things as they really are. This comes in the way of seeing directly into reality through the faculty of wisdom.

This true vision is not based on any concepts of ultimate “existence” or ultimate “non-existence,” which are the bases for speculative view. It is rooted in insight into the middle way of arising, which

²⁵¹ On the parable of the blind men and the elephant, see **Nānā Titthiyā S** (U 6.4,10-19) + SD 4a.14 (1.1).

²⁵² M 74,2 (SD 16.1).

²⁵³ M 72,15 (SD 6.15).

²⁵⁴ The 4 truths we are more familiar with are (1) suffering, (2) its arising, (3) its ending and (4) the way to its ending—this is the teaching model. The above is a practice or experiential model: the way we actually see true reality in terms of the truths. See **Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika S** (M 149,11 etc) + SD 41.9 (2.4).

²⁵⁵ A 7.51/4:68 (SD 40a.11).

²⁵⁶ M 63,9-10/1:431 (SD 5.8).

sees: (1) how the world arises with the arising of conditions, so that “non-existence” does not apply; and (2) how the world ceases with the ceasing of conditions, so that eternal “existence” does not apply.

Noble right view, then, is the direct seeing into the world as a flux of conditioned states.²⁵⁷ Since all is changing, no views will hold: we must keep on seeing, as it were, and what we actually see is only change that is going on even as we see. We are, then, free from views, so that we truly see and are awakened.

2 Right intention (*sammā,saṅkappa*; Skt *samyag,saṅkalpa*)

2.1 WHAT IS SAṅKAPPA?

2.1.1 The word *saṅkappa* comes from *sam* (prefix meaning “together”) + √KLP, “to be in order, capable, suitable”; thus, the raw sense of *saṅkappa* is a “putting together” in the mind, a thought construction, usually in reference to perceiving a sense-object and “making something” of it.²⁵⁸ In other words, what is merely a sense-object, we mentally “arrange” it in a particular manner that is appealing or attractive to us, or at least “conform” to our notion of things, our world-view. [2.2]

Conversely, what does not conform to our view of things or our liking, we would reject or ignore them. Or, if we have the inclination—which often happens if we are unawakened—we may even react violently to such perceived contradictions or threats to our likings and views. [2.3.2.3]

2.1.2 Such perceptions spur us on to strive for what we like and, often, to reject, even destroy, what we do not like. Hence, *saṅkappa* has the sense of a clearly formed thought or idea, which connotes purpose or intention. We may say, then, that *saṅkappa* is the directing of our attention to a mental-object (whether it is a form, a feeling, a smell, a taste, a touch or a thought), reacting to it in an idiosyncratic manner, in a particular way dictated by our likes and dislikes.

2.1.3 The Dhātu Nānatta Sutta (S 14.7) [2.1.4] explains how we react to our sense-experiences and our thoughts. When touched by such an experience, we are drawn into a cycle of “perceptions → thoughts → desires → passions → searching,” we may rightly surmise how the same process works for a wholesome situation.

A worldling—an unawakened person who is not even a streamwinner—listens to a Dharma-teaching and is inspired by what is heard. This sound-based perception of the teaching fills him with thoughts about it, which makes him desire to hear more; he becomes passionate about it and follows the teacher or studies the suttas deeper, continuing his search for more such teachings.

2.1.4 The Saññā Nānatta Sutta (S 14.7) explains how the “diversity of elements” (*dhātu nānatta*) influences thoughts and actions. This “diversity” refers to the form element, the 6 sense-objects, that is, the form element, the sound element, the smell element, the taste element, the touch element and the mind-object element.²⁵⁹

The Sutta then explains how

dependent on the diversity of <u>elements</u> ,	there arises <u>the diversity of perceptions</u> :	<i>saññā nānatta</i>
dependent on the diversity of <u>perceptions</u> ,	there arises <u>the diversity of thoughts</u> :	<i>saṅkappa nānatta</i>
dependent on the diversity of <u>thoughts</u> ,	there arises <u>the diversity of desires</u> :	<i>chanda nānatta</i>
dependent on the diversity of <u>desires</u> ,	there arises <u>the diversity of passions</u> :	<i>pariḷāha nānatta</i>
dependent on the diversity of <u>passions</u> ,	there arises <u>the diversity of searching</u> .	<i>pariyesanā nānatta</i>

²⁵⁷ S 12.15 (SD 6.13).

²⁵⁸ The opposite of such a captivating process is famously called “not-that-ness” or *atam,mayatā*: see *Atam,-mayatā*, SD 19.13.

²⁵⁹ The term element (*dhātu*) refers both to a basic “external” state (ie, what acts as a mental object), as well as a generic term for the 6 sense-faculties, their respective sense-objects and sense-consciousness, collectively called the “18 elements” (*aṭṭhārasa dhātu*): see **Bahu,dhātuka S** (M 115,4) SD 29.1a.

Dependent on the form element (or any of the other 5 elements), there is perception (*saññā*) of *form*; dependent of this perception, there is the thought (*sañkappa*) of *form*; dependent on this, there is the desire (*chanda*) for *form*; dependent on this there is the passion (*pariḷāhu*) or fever for *form*; and dependent on this, there is the search for that *form*. The same cycle goes for sound, smell, taste, touch and mind-objects (simply, thoughts).²⁶⁰

2.2 THE POLYSEMY OF SAÑKAPPA

2.2.1 As a term, *sañkappa* is closely linked with the early Buddhist teachings of the eightfold path in a **non-technical sense**. This means that we should work to understand and accept its polysemy—it has many senses, depending on the context.²⁶¹ As we have seen, *sañkappa* probably covers a broad range of senses that begins with perception (*saññā*), strongly driven by thoughts (*sañkappa*), desires (*chanda*), passions (*pariḷāha*) and continues with searching (*pariyesanā*). Hence, it is not wrong to render *sañkappa* as “intention,” mindful of its useful polysemy.

2.2.2 Mindfully and wisely done, this process—even if it is on a worldly level—can be wholesome. This is when such a quest inspires us to see the teacher as beautifying the teaching, the messenger of truth; the teacher is not the message. But the teacher’s teaching and example can inspire us to look deeper into the suttas and to practise meditation for ourselves. In due course, this self-reliance brings about self-realization so that the path opens up before us. This is also an example of spiritual friendship with the Dharma-spirited teacher [1.2.3.2].

2.3 THE COMPONENTS OF RIGHT INTENTION

2.3.1 Renunciation or desirelessness?

2.3.1.1 Right intention or right thought comprises thoughts free from sensual desire, from ill-will and from cruelty. On the worldly level, right intention is our resolve for

- (1) renunciation or desirelessness (*nekkhamma*; Skt *naiṣkāmya* or *naiṣkrāmya*), and the opposite of sensual pleasures (*kāma*);
- (2) non-ill will (*avyāpāda*; Skt *avyābādha*), equivalent to lovingkindness, and the opposite of ill will; and
- (3) non-violence or non-cruelty (*avihimsā*; Skt *ahimsā*), equivalent to compassion, and the opposite of desire to injure.

2.3.1.2 The key term here is the first one, that is, *nekkhamma*, while the other two are subsets of it. The Pali commentaries explain *nekkhamma* as that which has “turned away” or “departed” (*nikkhanta*, *nissata*) from greed or desire.²⁶² This suggests that they took the term to be derived from the Sanskrit *niṣ* (a prefix meaning “out, away”) + √KRAM, “to stride”—from which we get *niṣkrāmya* or the better known *naiṣkrāmya*, both meaning “departure or renunciation (from the world).”²⁶³

2.3.1.3 However, the commentaries seemed to take *nekkhamma* in an ethical or psychological sense, which reflects how the suttas use the word, that is, as *kāma*. Again here, we need to understand its polysemy [2.2.1]. In the suttas, *kāma* means both “desire” and “object of desire”; which is also true of *kāma* (a tatsama) in Sanskrit. Whether “desire” or “object of desire” is meant, it can often be teased out from the context.

2.3.1.4 From the Niddesa (a pair of canonical commentaries on the Sutta Nipāta) onwards, this distinction became clearer as “desire as defilement” (*kilesa, kāma*) and “desire as object” (*vatthu, -kāma*).²⁶⁴ We then understand that in the suttas, *nekkhamma* is opposed to *kāma*, but we also need to keep in mind the distinction, too: just as *kāma* has the senses of sense-desire and the object of sense-

²⁶⁰ S 14.7/2:144 (SD 17.5).

²⁶¹ On the polysemy of early Pali terminology, see [SD 1.1](#) (4.4.5) & SD 10.16 (1.3.1).

²⁶² eg, MA 2:79; VbhA 74, 117.

²⁶³ BHSD svv.

²⁶⁴ Nm 1:1. Further see SD 38.4 (3.1.2) & SD 41.4 (2.3.1).

desire, so, too, *nekkhamma* is both “desirelessness” and that which turns away from such objects of sense-desire.

2.3.2 Opposing triads

2.3.2.1 Right thought or right intention comprises the triad of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), non-ill will (*avyāpāda*) and non-violence (*avihimsā*). We see this in a number of contexts in the suttas, usually in opposition to the triad of sensual desire (*kāma*), ill will (*vyāpāda*) and violence (*vihimsā*).²⁶⁵ In this connection, this set of six terms are closely related not only to *saṅkappa*, but also to “thought” (*vitakka*), “perception” (*saññā*) and “element” (*dhātu*)—all of which then take the sense of “thought,” while also connoting “intention” [2.1].

2.3.2.2 We already see such terms in **the Mahā Cattārīsaka** (M 117), where it is said:

14 And, bhikshus, what is **the right thought that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor?

Thinking, thought, intention, mental focus, mental fixity, directing of the mind, verbal formation (*takko vitakko saṅkappo appanā vyappanā cetaso abhiniropanā vacī, saṅkhāro*)²⁶⁶—this, bhikshus, is the right thought that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor.

M 117,14/3:73 (SD 6.10); Vbh 86

2.3.2.3 Furthermore, the suttas use the second triad—*kāma*, *vyāpāda* and *vihimsā* [2.3.2.1]—to explain wrong thought (*micchā, saṅkappā*). Hence, in **the Mahā Cattārīsaka** (M 117), we see “wrong thought” defined as “thought of sensual lust, thought of ill will, thought of violence.”²⁶⁷ And this passage from the same sutta gives us a good understanding of the two levels of the path and their related terms:

12 And what, bhikshus, is **right thought**?

Bhikshus, there are two kinds of right thought, I say.

13 Bhikshus, there is the right thought with influxes, partaking of merit, ripening in birth-bases [acquisition of aggregates].²⁶⁸

Bhikshus, there is the right thought that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor.²⁶⁹

And what, bhikshus, is **the right thought with influxes**, partaking of merit, *ripening in birth-bases*?

Thought of renunciation,²⁷⁰ thought of non-ill will, thought of non-violence²⁷¹—

this, bhikshus, is right thought *with influxes*, partaking of merit, *ripening in birth-bases*.

14 And, bhikshus, what is **the right thought that is noble**, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor?

²⁶⁵ D I11 215; M I 114-6; I1 26-8; S I1 152-3; A I1 137-8; 111 429, 446-7. For a technical discussion of the term *nekkhamma* in the context of right intention, see Gethin 2001:191-194.

²⁶⁶ Here the factor of intention (*saṅkappa*) is identified with initial application (*vitakka*), that is instrumental in bringing about dhyana by fixing and directing the mind upon its object. For *vicāra* as “verbal formation” (*vacī, saṅkhāra*), see **Cūḷa Vedalla S** (M 44,15/1:301). “Application of mind” (*cetaso abhiniropanā*) also occurs at Vbh 257 & Vism 142 in a def of *vitakka*.

²⁶⁷ M 117,11/3:73 (SD 6.10); Vbh 86.

²⁶⁸ *Atthi bhikkhave sammā, saṅkappo s’āsavo puñña, bhāgiyo upadhi, vepakko*. Note here that, from the supramundane viewpoint, the mundane wholesome path-factors are regarded as “with influxes” and “ripening with birth-bases” (for future rebirths). However, the Sutta defs for the path-factors of mundane right thought, right speech, right action and right livelihood recur in other suttas as part of the standard def of the noble eightfold path that leads to the ending of *dukkha*: see §§13, 19×2, 25, 31×2 (M 3:73,9, 74,3+29 & 75,20); also SD 6.10 (4.3.2).

²⁶⁹ *Atthi bhikkhave sammā, saṅkappo ariyo an’āsavo lok’uttaro magg’āṅgo*.

²⁷⁰ “Thought of renunciation,” *nekkhamma saṅkappa*, also tr “intention of desirelessness.” Opp: *kāma saṅkappa*, “thought of lustfulness.” But see Gethin 2001:190, 191 f.

²⁷¹ This is a stock def of right thought as a factor of the noble eightfold path, as at **Sacca, vibhaṅga S** (M 141, 25/3:251).

Thinking, thought, intention, mental focus, mental fixity, directing of the mind, verbal formation [2.3.2.2]—

this, bhikshus, is the right thought that is noble, without influx, supramundane, a path-factor.

15 One who makes an effort to give up wrong thought, to cultivate right thought—this is one’s right effort.

One who is mindful gives up wrong thought and dwells cultivating right thought—this is one’s right mindfulness.

Thus these three things run along with right thought, turn around it, that is to say: *right view, right effort, right mindfulness*.

2.3.2.4 Of the three factors in the last paragraph, the Commentary tells us that they refer only to the factors co-existent with supramundane right thought. At the start of the practice, the three mundane right thoughts arise separately, but at the moment of the supramundane path, a single right thought arises cutting off the threefold wrong thought. This being the case, the supramundane right thought may also be regarded as the thought of desirelessness, non-ill will and non-violence. The same method applies to right speech, etc. (MA 4:132)

2.3.3 Avyāpāda and avihimsā

2.3.3.1 The other four terms are easier to understand and it helps to examine how **the Vibhaṅga**, and even **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, explain *vyāpāda* and its opposite, *avyāpāda*, and *vihimsā* and its opposite, *avihimsā*. *Vyāpāda*, “ill will,” is simply hate (*dosa*) and is defined in the Vibhaṅga and the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī in basically the same way.²⁷²

2.3.3.2 Conversely, *avyāpāda* is explained as “non-hate” (*adosa*) or “lovingkindness” (*mettā*).²⁷³ *Vihimsā* is generally more extreme than hate. It is expressed in such a way to cause bodily harm upon another.²⁷⁴ Just as *avyāpāda*, as open acceptance, opposes *vyāpāda* as general rejection or unfriendliness, so *avihimsā* is the compassion (*karuṇā*) that opposes or heals *vihimsā*.

2.3.3.3 In short, violence or cruelty (*vihimsā*), in the face of others’ suffering, is the unwholesome mind that wants it to continue, while non-violence (*avihimsā*) is the compassionate mind that wants it to stop. *Saṅkappa*, then, is how our mind applies itself to the sense-objects and thoughts that confront us. Wrong thought attends to these objects with thoughts of desire, hate or violence; right thought applies itself to such objects with thoughts that are lust-free, friendly and compassionate.

2.4 THE PROGRESS OF SAṅKAPPA

2.4.1 Right thoughts, wrong thoughts

2.4.1.1 Interestingly, even right thought ceases to arise when the mind reaches the 2nd dhyana. It is stated in **the Samaṇa,maṇḍikā Sutta** (M 78) that “wholesome thoughts” (*kusala,saṅkappa*)—consisting of *nekkhamma,saṅkappa, avyāpāda,saṅkappa* and *avihimsā,saṅkappa*—cease without remainder in the 2nd dhyana. The reason is clear: the 2nd dhyana lacks *vitakka* and *vicāra*, which are the bases for thought.²⁷⁵

However, this is only a temporary state or event. When we come out of dhyana, and thinking resumes, then both wrong thought and right thought will occur in those of us who are still worldlings. However, this is less likely to occur in a learner, and certainly not in an arhat whose mind is fully freed from all defilements through self-awakening.

²⁷² Vbh 86; Dhs 84, 189.

²⁷³ Vbh 86; Dhs 13, 189.

²⁷⁴ “Here, someone injures beings by various means, such as with his hands, a stone, a stick, a sword, or a rope. Such injuring, severe injuring, cruelty, severe cruelty, hostility, severe hostility, such onslaught, is called ‘the element of violence’ (*vihimsā,dhātu*)” (*Idh ’ekacco paṇinā vā leḍḍunā va daṇḍena vā satthena vā rajjuyā vā aññatar’aññatarena satte viheṭheti. Yā eva,rūpā heṭhanā viheṭhanā himsanā vihimsanā rosanā virosanā parū-paghāto, ayam vuccati vihimsā,dhātu, Vbh 86.*)

²⁷⁵ M 78,13/2:28 (SD 18.9).

2.4.1.2 An interesting question arises here. Those of us who are, in some way, familiar with the suttas know about the 3 unwholesome roots of greed (*lobha*), hate (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). Now, we have in **wrong thought**, the elements of *kāma*, *vyāpāda* and *vihimsā*, and in **right thought**, the elements of *nekkhamma*, *avyāpāda* and *avihimsā*. [2.3.3]

Instead of “violent thoughts” (*vihimsā,saṅkappa*) and “non-violent thoughts” (*avihimsā,saṅkappa*), we should expect to find “deluded thoughts” (*moha,saṅkappa*) and “undeluded thoughts” (*amoha,-saṅkappa*).²⁷⁶ Why does hate, as it were, appear twice in the same set? Gethin thinks that “the answer seems to be because *sammā-saṅkappa* is seen as the complement to *sammā-diṭṭhi*” (2001: 194). He goes on to say that “it would be both inappropriate and unnecessary to bring in ‘thoughts of wisdom’ in the context of right view,” and quotes this passage from **the Diṭṭhi Sutta** (A 4.72):

Accomplished in four things, bhikkhus, a monk has entered upon the sure, safe way and has initiated for himself the birth of the destruction of the influxes.

With which four? With thoughts of desirelessness, thoughts of non-hate, thoughts of non-violence and right view.²⁷⁷ (M 78,13/2:28), SD 18.9

Here, we see “right view” as the first path-factor and “thoughts of desirelessness, thoughts of non-hate, thoughts of non-violence” as the second. If the factor of “thoughts of non-violence” with “thoughts of non-delusion,” it would be redundant in the face of “right view.”

2.4.2 Developments

2.4.2.1 In the **Samaṇa,maṇḍikā Sutta** (M 78), we see a connection, albeit a less prominent one, between *vitakka* and *saṅkappa*. Questions are asked about the nature of thoughts (*saṅkappa*), how they arise and end. The Sutta, for example, says that *kusala,saṅkappa* (wholesome thoughts, comprised of *nekkhamma,saṅkappa,avyāpāda,saṅkappa* and *avihimsā,saṅkappa*) cease without remainder (*aparisesā nirujjhanti*) in the 2nd dhyana, which, of course, precisely lacks *vitakka* and *vicāra*.²⁷⁸

Saṅkappa, then, depends on how the mind applies itself to various objects. **Wrong thought** turns towards various objects with thoughts of desire, hatred, or violence [cruelty]; **right thought** turns towards those objects with thoughts of desirelessness [letting-go or charity], lovingkindness, or non-violence. However, even right thoughts cease without remainder from the 2nd dhyana onwards, and for the arhat, who does not have to “think” right thoughts: he is naturally good.

2.4.2.2 By the early Abhidhamma period,²⁷⁹ however, *saṅkappa* is clearly identified with the technical term, *vitakka*, which refers to thinking that occurs in meditation. The term *vitakka* is best known in this connection as the 1st dhyana-factor (*jhān’āṅga*), when it is paired with *vicāra*. While *vitakka* here acts as a decisive thought to initially apply itself to the meditation-object, *vicāra*, examines it, thus keeping it there.²⁸⁰ [2.4.1]

The early Abhidhamma texts, such as **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**, define *sammā,saṅkappa* as “thinking of, pondering, thought, fixing upon, sustained fixing upon, mental absorption, right thought.”²⁸¹ There seems to be a sort of progressive intensity in this listing. Thus, wrong thoughts encompass thoughts and desires that subtly, but always, tend to desire, ill will or violence, to thoughts caught up with them; right thoughts encompass a mind that subtly, but always, touch desirelessness, non-hatred or non-

²⁷⁶ In fact, Pātañjali’s Yoga,sūtras (a collection of 196 aphorisms, c 400 CE) mentions “thoughts” (*vitarka*) “preceded by greed, anger or delusion” (*lobha,krodha,moha,purvaka*), and how the yogi should develop their opposites. (YS 3.33 f)

²⁷⁷ *Catuhi bhikkhave dhammehi samannāgato bhikkhu appaṇakatam paṭipadam paṭipanno hoti yoni c’assa āradhā hoti āsavānaṃ khayāya. Katamehi catuhi. Nekkhamma,vitakkena avyāpāda,vitakkena avihimsā,vitakkena sammā,diṭṭhiyā* (A 4.72/2:76), SD 74.13. *Appaṇakatam*, an abstract n of *appaṇa* + *kata* or *appaṇaka* + *kata*, meaning “safe and sure; certainty”: see **Appaṇaka Paṭipadā S** (A 3.16), SD 74.11 & **Appaṇaka S** (M 60) + SD 35.5 (1.2).

²⁷⁸ M 78,13/2:28 (SD 18.9).

²⁷⁹ Beginning in 300 BCE and a couple of centuries after that.

²⁸⁰ On the dhyana-factors (*jhān’āṅga*), see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (6).

²⁸¹ Dhs 12: *takko vitakko saṅkappo appanā vyappanā cetaso abhiniropanā sammā,saṅkappo* (Dhs 12). For a parallel def of *micchā,saṅkappo*, see, eg, Dhs 78.

violence, to thoughts fully absorbed in them. We almost do not see any such technicality of *saṅkappa* in the suttas.

2.5 SUPRAMUNDANE RIGHT INTENTION

2.5.1 In the (Mahā, purisa) Vassa, kāra Sutta (A 4.35), we see *saṅkappa* applied to the supramundane level, where it is focused on mental application (*vitakka*) of an arhat. Such a saint is able to direct his mind to whatever *saṅkappa* or *vitakka* he wishes:

Thus, he thinks (*vitakketi*) whatever he wishes to think,
and thinks not what he does not wish to think.

He intends (*saṅkappeti*) whatever he wishes to intend,
and intends not what he does not wish to intend.

Thus, he has attained to mastery of the mind (*ceto, vasi-p, patta*) over his thought-paths.²⁸²

He gains at will, without trouble nor difficulty, the 4 dhyanas that are the higher mind and pleasant dwellings here and now. (A 4.35/2:36), SD 82.9

The Buddha then states that such a person is an arhat, and on being questioned by Vassakāra, declares that he (the Buddha) is himself such a person.

2.5.2 Right thought arises from right view and supports it because both are a part of wisdom. Right thought helps right view as a constant or habitual application of the mind to a mental sign or a meditation-object so that it is rightly seen to be impermanent, suffering and non-self.

Just as a money-changer both visually examines a coin in his hand to be genuine or false and, with the help of his fingers turns over the coin and taps it,²⁸³ he carefully applies his mind to the sign or object so that he understands it in a discerning way.²⁸⁴

3 Right speech (*sammā, vācā*; Skt *samyag, vāc*)

3.1 WHY IS RIGHT SPEECH THE FIRST MORAL VIRTUE PATH-FACTOR?

3.1.1 A clue to why “right speech” is the first factor in the moral virtue aggregate (*sīla-k, khandha*) is found in **the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta** (M 44), when the nun Dhamma, dinnā, in answer to a question by the layman Visākha, says:

Avuso Visākha, having first thought and pondered [applied thought and sustained thought], one then breaks out into speech. Therefore, thinking and pondering are verbal formation.²⁸⁵
(M 44, 15.3), SD 40a.9

3.1.2 The first group of path-factors of the eightfold path in the normal sequence is the wisdom aggregate (*pañña-k, khandha*), comprising right view and right thought. Both of these are mental aspects of our being. The key activities of the mind in daily life are what we can simply call “thinking” (*vitakka*) and “pondering” (*vicāra*), two important terms we have noted in the Cūḷa Vedalla Sutta [3.1.1].

²⁸² Cf **Vitakka, saṅghāna S** (M 20, 8.2), SD 1.6.

²⁸³ Vism 16.100/515.

²⁸⁴ Cf the *saṅkalpa* of the brahmins before they perform a sacrificial ritual. Chāndogya Upaniṣad has a passage on *saṅkalpa*, where Sanatkumāra (the oldest progenitor of mankind, according to Vedic mythology) tells the sage Narada: “Intention (*saṅkalpa*), undoubtedly, is greater than the mind (*manasa*), for it is only after a man has formed an intention that he makes up his mind; after that he vocalizes it to articulate a name. The vedic formulas are contained in the name, and rites, in the vedic formulas” (ChandU 7.4.1) (P Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, NY: Oxford Univ Press, 1998:261). However, it is likely this is post-Buddha as, it mentions the “Ātharvaṇa as the fourth” (7.1.2). Only 3 Vedas are mentioned in the suttas.

²⁸⁵ *Pubbe kho āvuso visākha vitakketvā vicāretvā pacchā vācamā bhindati. Tasmā vitakka, vicārā vacī, saṅkhāro* (M 44, 15/1:301), SD 40a.9.

3.2 VIÑÑATTI

3.2.1 When our thoughts are expressed aloud, they become speech (*vācā*) or communication (*viññatti*). The term **viññatti** (Skt *vijñapti*) is interesting: it literally means “making known, intimation.” It is not a sutta term; it does not seem to appear in the suttas at all. It does however appear in **the Vinaya**, where it is used in a non-technical sense to simply mean “hint, hinting.”²⁸⁶ As a technical term, its first appearance is in the Abhidhamma, that is, in **the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī**,²⁸⁷ **the Vibhaṅga**,²⁸⁸ and the late **Kathā,vatthu**.²⁸⁹ It is briefly discussed in **the Milinda,pañha**, where it is defined as “bodily intimation” (*kāya,viññatti*) and “verbal intimation” (*vacī,viññatti*).²⁹⁰

3.2.2 Both *kāya,viññatti* and *vacī,viññatti* belong to the body aggregate (*rūpa-k,khandha*). Since they are produced by the co-nascent (*sahajāta*) volition, and therefore purely physical – it should not be confused with karma which is mental.²⁹¹ However, they may have karmic effect on the person intimating it, depending on his volition.²⁹²

3.2.3 More specifically, we can distinguish between outright “speech” (*vācā*) and its more subtle aspects of “verbal intimation” (*vacī,viññatti*), which—in the case of speech—refers to *how* it is spoken or expressed, or even including what is *not* spoken and other related aspects of communication. However, in broad practical terms, “**verbal intimation**” (*vacī,viññatti*) encompasses a full range of both verbal and any kind of vocal expressions that is karmically motivated, unwholesome or wholesome. In other words, it includes any kind of human sounds or human-initiated sounds. An example of the latter is when, say, we, with an unwholesome mind, move or throw things around loudly just to distract someone meditating because we do not like that person.

On the other hand, we may recite some sutta or paritta verses in a soothing way to put at ease the mind of a sick person in pain or someone emotionally troubled. Such an action is regarded as verbal communication and a wholesome one, too. This is, indirectly, right speech—certainly, it is wholesomely rooted verbal and mental karma.

3.3 ABSTAINING FROM WRONG SPEECH

3.3.1 The 4 kinds of wrong speech

3.3.1.1 The third path-factor—the first in the moral virtue aggregate—right speech (*sammā,vācā*), comprises the following four precepts, as defined in **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141):

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) refraining from lying [false speech] | <i>musā,vādā veramaṇī</i> |
| (2) refraining from slander [tale-bearing] | <i>pisuṇāya vācāya veramaṇī</i> |
| (3) refraining from harsh speech | <i>pharusāya vācāya veramaṇī</i> |
| (4) refraining from frivolous chatter | <i>samhappalāpa veramaṇī</i> |

(M 141,26/3:251), SD 11.11

²⁸⁶ V 1:312,26, 314,3, 3:144,34, 145,29, 147,25, 148,27, 246,21, 4:2,16.

²⁸⁷ Dhs 125×2, 127×3, 143, 144, 147×4, 152×2, 156×6, 164, 165 (totalling 21 times).

²⁸⁸ Vbh 13×2.

²⁸⁹ Kvu 10.10/440, 10.11/441×2 + 443.

²⁹⁰ Miln 229. Similarly def at Vism 14.61+62/14.

²⁹¹ See also *Buddhist Dictionary*, sv & Kvu §10 tr in Nyanatiloka, *Guide Through the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka*, Kandy, 1938, 3rd ed 1971:74.

²⁹² *Vijñapti* (Skt) is a key idea in Yogācāra, which defines it as “representation,” denoting a mentally generated projection of subject and object that is falsely believed to exist. In reality, according to Yogācāra, these projections are merely superimposed by unenlightened beings upon actuality. The aim in Yogācāra practice is to realize the false nature of these projections and attain non-dual awareness (*nirvikalpa,jñāna*). The Yogācāra treatise, *Vijñāptimātratāsiddhi* (Demonstration of Mere Representation), representing the philosophy of the Yogācāra master, Dharmapāla (530-561), is most influential in East Asian Buddhism.

3.3.1.2 It is clear from this list [3.3.0.1], that the 4 kinds of wrong speech overlap with the 4 kinds of unwholesome speech of the 10 unwholesome courses of conduct (*akusala kamma,patha*),²⁹³ and their negative counterparts, the 4 kinds of right speech, overlap with their positive counterparts in the 10 wholesome courses of conduct (*kusala kamma,patha*).²⁹⁴

3.3.2 Related suttas

The 4 courses of wrong speech to be avoided are defined in **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta** (A 10.206), as follows:

“And how, bhikshus, is the defiling fault of **verbal action** due to unwholesome volition, with painful outcome, painful results fourfold?

3 (4) Here, bhikshus, a certain person speaks falsehood:

when questioned as a witness before a council, before a congregation, in the midst of relatives, in the midst of a guild [or company], in the midst of the royal court [a court of law] and questioned thus: ‘Sir, tell us what you know!’

Not knowing, he says he knows, or knowing, he says he knows not;

having not seen, he says he saw, or having seen, he says he did not see—

consciously lying thus for his own sake, for the sake of others or for some small material²⁹⁵ gain.

(5) Here again, he speaks divisive words:

what he has heard here (from others), he repeats it there (to others) to divide them;

what he has heard there, he repeats it here to divide them—

thus he divides the united,

who encourages the divided (to remain so) [rejoicing in division];

being pleased at discord,²⁹⁶

enjoying discord, delighting in discord, saying words conducive to discord.²⁹⁷

(6) Here again, he speaks harsh words—

he utters words that are rough, hard,

hurting to others, offensive to others,

connected with anger,²⁹⁸

inconducive to mental concentration.

(7) Here again, he chatters frivolously [utters useless talk]—

he speaks at the wrong time, speaks what is untrue, speaks what is unbeneficial,

speaks what is not the teaching, what is not the discipline;

he speaks words not worth treasuring,

spoken out of time, poorly reasoned,

undefined [rambling], unconnected with the goal.²⁹⁹

(M 41,9) SD 5.7, = (A 10.206,3), SD 3.9

3.4 THE 4 KINDS OF RIGHT SPEECH

3.4.0 Right speech

Right speech is the opposite of *wrong speech*. There are **the 4 kinds of right speech**, which we shall now examine:

²⁹³ On the 10 unwholesome courses of action (*dasa akusala kamma,patha*), see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,7-10), SD 5.7; **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,1-7), SD 3.9.

²⁹⁴ On the 10 wholesome courses of action (*dasa kusala kamma,patha*), see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,11-14), SD 5.7; **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,7.2-12), SD 3.9.

²⁹⁵ “Material,” *āmisā*, alt tr “worldly”.

²⁹⁶ “Discord,” *vagga*, fr *vi-agga* (Skt *vyagra*) opp of *sāmagga*, “concord”. See M 1:286; It 11 = V 2:205.

²⁹⁷ On dealing with slander, see, eg, **Brahmajāla S** (D 1,1.5/1:4), SD 25.

²⁹⁸ “Connected with anger,” *kodha,sāmantā*, adv of (adj) *samanta*, “all around.”

²⁹⁹ “Unconnected with the goal,” ie, unrelated to the goal of cultivating moral virtue, of mental cultivation, of wisdom, and of liberation.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|
| (1) refraining from lying [false speech] | [3.4.1] |
| (2) refraining from slander [divisive speech] | [3.4.2] |
| (3) refraining from harsh speech | [3.4.3] |
| (4) refraining from frivolous chatter | [3.4.4] |

But first, let us examine how the Commentaries define the criteria (*sambhāra*) for each of the kinds of wrong speech.

3.4.1 Refraining from lying

3.4.1.1 The first of the 4 kinds of right speech is that of “**refraining from lying [false speech]**.” Here “false” (*musā*) refers to the verbal effort or body language made by one bent on deceiving another. “False” refers to what is unreal and untrue; and “speech” (*vāda*) refers to the communication of that false statement. The 4 constituents of lying or false speech are as follows:

- (1) a false situation;
- (2) the desire to communicate it to others;
- (3) communicating it (verbally or physically);
- (4) the intention of lying.³⁰⁰

3.4.1.2 Lying is false communication, especially with ill intent. When we *knowingly* withhold the truth or do nothing that could otherwise prevent suffering or harm to another, the fourth precept is broken, too. For example, when we see a traveller heading for certain death in a dangerous forest, but we, with ill intent, do not warn him, and, as a result, he dies—this is a vital aspect of false speech, certainly a malicious silence. Even though we have not spoken anything—indeed, *because* we have spoken nothing when we should have said something helpful—we have here committed the bad mental karma of ill will.³⁰¹

3.4.1.3 **The Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta** (A 10.206) define the refraining from falsehood, that is, practising **truth-telling**, as follows:

(4) Here, houselords, a certain person, *having given up speaking falsehood*, refrains from speaking falsehood—

when questioned as a witness before a council, before a congregation, in the midst of relatives, in the midst of a guild [or company], in the midst of the royal court [a court of law] and questioned thus: ‘Come now, man,³⁰² tell us what you know!’

Not knowing, he says he knows not, or knowing, he says he knows;

having not seen, he says he did not see, or having seen, he says he saw—

not consciously telling a lie thus for his own sake, for the sake of others, or (even) for some small material gain.

(D 11,13), SD 1.7, = (M 41,13), SD 5.7, = (A 10.206,9), SD 3.9

3.4.1.4 **The Amba,laṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 61) has a simple yet beautiful object lesson by the Buddha to young Rāhula on the badness of lying. Showing Rāhula a water-vessel with only a little bit of water left, the Buddha says that “little is the recluship” of those who shamelessly tell a deliberate lie. Then, he throws away that water, and points out that “thrown away is the recluship” of those who deliberately lie. Finally, he inverts the bowl and declares that “upside down is the recluship” of those who deliberately lie.

The inverting of a monk’s bowl (*patta,nikkujjana*) is a symbolic gesture of boycotting a layperson who misconducts himself with the monks, such as speaking ill of any of the 3 jewels. In the Sutta, this gesture is applied to the monks themselves³⁰³—that they lose their authenticity as renunciants if they deliberately lie.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ These nn on lying are from comy on Sammā Diṭṭhi S (M 9) at **MA 1:200**; also KhpA 34 (tr KhpA:Ñ 31 f).

³⁰¹ These nn (3.4.1.1+2) on lying are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (4).

³⁰² Reading *eh’ambho purisa* (for text’s *evam bho puriso*), as at **Sevitabbāsevitabba S** (M 114,6.7), SD 39.8.

³⁰³ Cv 5.20 (V 2:124-127).

³⁰⁴ M 61,6 (SD 3.10).

3.4.2 Refraining from divisive speech

3.4.2.1 The second kind of right speech is the case in which a person abstains from divisive speech—which includes slander and tale-bearing—which would cause friends or different groups to lose confidence in and regard for each other, and so create dissension and strife amongst them.

Divisive speech (*pisuṇa, vācā*) or malicious talk is bodily or verbal (even vocal) communication, that is, the use of action or sound, to bring *division* among others or to endear oneself or benefit in the process.

3.4.2.2 There are these 4 constituents of divisive speech:

- (1) a party to be separated or alienated;
- (2) the intention to divide, or the desire to endear oneself;
- (3) the appropriate effort; and
- (4) the communicating of that intention to that party.³⁰⁵

3.4.2.3 Although divisive speech breaks up a group, it is not divisive to admonish a group of people or cult members bent on vice or false teachings (cheating, gambling, debauchery, superstition, etc), so that some of them, realizing the error of their ways, break away from the group or cult.³⁰⁶ Sāriputta and Moggallāna, for example, under the Buddha's instructions, go to Gayā, Sīsa to preach to Deva, -datta's schismatics, so that they, after attaining the Dharma-eye, return to the Buddha, angering Deva-datta.³⁰⁷

3.4.2.4 **The Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta** (A 10.206) define the refraining from divisive speech, as follows:

- (5) Here again, *having given up divisive speech*, he refrains from divisive speech—
what he has heard here (from others), he does not repeat it there (to others) to divide them;
what he has heard there, he does not repeat it here to divide them—
thus he is one who unites the disunited,
or who discourages the divided (from remaining so) [not rejoicing in division];
he is pleased at concord, enjoying concord, delighting in concord, saying words conducive to concord. (D 11,13), SD 1.7, = (M 41,13), SD 5.7, = (A 10.206,9), SD 3.9

3.4.3 Refraining from harsh speech

3.4.3.1 The third abstinence is from words uttered in anger which are rough, harsh, and abusive, such as insinuations regarding race, family, personality or occupation. **Harsh speech** (*pharusa, vācā*) is the kind of speech by which we make both the speaker and the listener feel hurt or negative, the kind of speech which is also itself harsh, being unpleasant both to the ear and to the heart. There are these 3 constituents of harsh speech:

- (1) another to be abused;
- (2) a hating mind; and
- (3) the abusing.³⁰⁸

3.4.3.2 **The Kevaḍḍha Sutta** (D 11), **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta** (A 10.206) define the refraining from harsh speech, that is, practising **pleasant speech** (*piya, vācā*), as follows:

Here again, *having given up harsh speech*, he refrains from harsh speech—
he utters words that are blameless, pleasant to the ear, touching the heart,
urbane, loved by the masses, pleasant to the masses.

(D 11,13), SD 1.7, = (M 41,13), SD 5.7, = (A 10.206,9), SD 3.9

³⁰⁵ These nn on divisive speech are from comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at **MA 1:200 f.**

³⁰⁶ For similar nn (3.4.2.1) on divisive speech, see SD 5.7 (2.1) (5).

³⁰⁷ Cv 7.2-4 = V 2:184-203; DhA 1:143; J 1:491; ItA 1:69 & Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, Singapore, 2002, 2013: ch 7.11.

³⁰⁸ These nn on harsh speech are from comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at **MA 1:201**. For similar nn of harsh speech (3.4.3.1), see SD 5.7 (2.1) (6).

3.4.3.3 Harsh speech has arisen only when there is an ill intention in the speaker’s mind. This Commentary story illustrates the principle. A village boy, it is said, went to the forest without heeding his mother’s words. Unable to make him turn back, she scolded him, saying: “May a wild buffalo chase you!” Then, a buffalo appeared before him in the forest. The boy made an act of truth,³⁰⁹ saying: “Let it not be as my mother said but as she thought!” The buffalo stood as though tied there.

Sometimes, parents even say to their children, “May robbers chop you to pieces!” yet they do not even wish a lotus leaf to fall upon them. And teachers and preceptors sometimes say to their pupils, “What is the use of these shameless and heedless brats? Drive them out!” Yet, they wish for their success in learning and attainment. (MA 1:201)

Hence, although the means employed by the mother is to scare her son, or even hurting his feelings (to make him realize the urgency of the situation), but because of the compassion of the mother’s mind, it was not really harsh speech. In other words, the harshness, or seeming harshness, of words alone does not make harsh speech. It is the negative intention behind the words that make it so.

3.4.3.4 The Cātumā Sutta (M 67) records an interesting case where the Buddha seems to show his anger and disapproval of a group of rowdy new monks, led by Sāriputta and Moggallāna. To teach them a lesson in monastic propriety, he actually dismisses them, refusing to meet them. This seems to be the closest to “harsh speech” we can imagine of the Buddha. This, of course, is quite uncharacteristic of him, as he would usually patiently and zealously work to win over difficult people.

The Sutta narrator goes on to say that even Brahmā Sahampati,³¹⁰ out of compassion, intercedes on the monks’ behalf, as do a group of concerned Sakyas. Meanwhile, the monks live on their own and practise the Dharma. The Buddha, as we know, is incapable of any anger or negative emotion. He is actually skilfully preparing the monks for Dharma instructions.

After a brief interlude, he allows the monks to meet him, when he famously instructs them on the 4 dangers to the holy life [4.4.3.4]. The Cātumā Sutta story, then, shows how serious, yet skilful, the Buddha can be in making a point in difficult cases, when the truth needs to be told or shown.³¹¹

3.4.4 Refraining from frivolous chatter

3.4.4.1 Frivolous chatter (*samphappalāpa, vācā*) is idle gossip or useless talk, which is communicated verbally and also through the body. There are 2 constituents of frivolous chatter:

- (1) the intention of purposeless chatter; and
- (2) communicating it to others.³¹²

Although frivolous chatter has only two constituents, there is a very wide range of frivolous talk, and its effects are usually very negative, distracting us from the progress on the eightfold path. In simple terms, frivolous chatter is any kind of speech that is “not connected with the goal.” [3.4]

3.4.4.2 The discourses—such as **the Kevaddha Sutta** (D 11), **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta** (A 10.206)—define the refraining from frivolous talk, that is, practising **beneficial speech**, as follows:

- (7) Here again, *having given up frivolous talk*, he refrains from frivolous talk—he speaks at the right time,³¹³ speaks what is true, speaks what is beneficial,³¹⁴

³⁰⁹ An “act of truth” (*sacca, kiriya*) is where we invoke something that is universally good or true, true in the sense that it is a bona fide fact, and stand by that as a “witness” for what we claim that is uncertain or challenged by others: see SD 39.2 (2).

³¹⁰ **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26) records how brahma Sahampati famously entreats the Buddha to teach the Dharma (M 26,20), SD 1.11. On another occasion, Sahampati reads the Buddha’s mind: **Gāraṇa S** (S 6.2,9), SD 12.3.

³¹¹ M 67 (SD 34.7).

³¹² These nn on frivolous talk are from comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at **MA 1:201 f**.

³¹³ *Kāla, vādī ... bhāsītā hoti kālena*. Here, *kāla-* means “befitting the occasion,” while *kālena* means “in time,” ie, neither too early nor too late. However, *bhāsītā hoti* qualifies *nidhāna, vādī* (preceding it) as the 7th course of good karma—as *nidhāna, vādī bhāsītā hoti*—at D 3:269, 290; M 1:287; A 5:266, 275-278.

³¹⁴ *Bhūta, vādī attha, vādī*. Comy glosses *attha, vādī*, as that he speaks about what is connected with the spiritual goal here and now, and hereafter (MA 2:208; DA 1:76). However, here, I have rendered *attha* as “the beneficial,

speaks what is the teaching,³¹⁵ what is the discipline,³¹⁶
 he speaks words worth treasuring, spoken in time,
 well-reasoned, well-defined [not rambling], connected with the goal.³¹⁷
 (D 11,13), SD 1.7, = (M 41,13), SD 5.7, = (A 10.206,9), SD 3.9

3.4.4.3 Polite conversation (such as asking after another’s health, etc) or telling fairy tales and stories to children for their healthy emotional and moral development are not frivolous chatter. Any kind of well-intentioned talk (free from the 3 unwholesome roots) aimed at ridding greed, hate or delusion from another’s mind is not frivolous talk. It is, in fact, wholesome speech.³¹⁸

3.5 “CONNECTED WITH THE GOAL”

3.5.1 What is *not* connected with the goal”

The very last phrase in the “right speech pericope” [3.4.4.2]—“**connected with the goal**” (*attha, -samhita*)—is very significant, and need some elaboration. We have already noted that whatever is *attha* is meaningful, purposeful and beneficial, especially in the Dharma sense [1.3.1.3]. Let us begin here by examining what kind of speech is *not* “beneficial.”

3.5.2 Animal talk

3.5.2.1 What kind of speech is regarded as actually unbeneficial? The suttas mention a stock of **the 28 kind of animal talk** (*tiracchāna, kathā*) or low talk, that is,

“talk about kings [politics], thieves [crimes], ministers [intrigues],
 armies, dangers, battles,
 food, drinks, clothing, dwellings, garlands [adornments], perfumes,
 relatives, vehicles, villages, market-towns, cities, provinces,
 women (and men), heroes, street talk, talk by the well,
 talk about the departed [ancestors], talk about diversity,
 talk about the ending of the world or of the oceans,
 talk about rebirth in this or that existence [whether things exist or not].”³¹⁹

This stock list of animal talk is found in the following texts:

			<u>those indulging in animal talk</u>
Brahma, jāla Sutta	D 1,1.17/1:7 f	SD 25.2	monastics should refrain from them
Samañña, phala Sutta	D 2,52/1:66	SD 8.10	wanderers in general
Poṭṭhapāda Sutta	D 9,3/1:178	SD 7.14	Poṭṭhapāda and other wanderers
Udumbārikā Siha.nāda Sutta	D 25,2/3:36	SD 1.4	Nigrodha and other wanderers
Sandaka Sutta	M 76,4/1:513 f	SD 35.7	Sandaka and other wanderers
Mahā Sakul’udāyi Sutta	M 77,4/2:2	SD 49.5a	Sakul’udāyi and other wanderers
Samāṇa, maṇḍikā Sutta	M 78,3/2:23	SD 18.9	Samāṇa, maṇḍika, putta & wanderers
Cūḷa Sakul’udāyi Sutta	M 79,3/2:30	SD 91.4	Sakul’udāyi and other wanderers
Mahā Suññatā Sutta	M 122,12/3:113	SD 11.4	said to be “wrong speech”

the good (incl the goal),” which fits the flow of ideas better. As *attha* (as “goal”) appears at the end of this stock passage, I have rendered this closing word as “the goal,” which seems more fitting.

³¹⁵ He speaks on the 9 supramundane things (*nava lok’uttara, dhamma*) (MA 2:208 = DA 1:76), ie, the 4 paths, 4 fruitions, nirvana (Dhs 1094).

³¹⁶ *Dhamma, vādī vinaya, vādī*. The disciplines of restraint (*samvara*) (of the senses) and of letting go (*pahāna*) (of defilements) (MA 2:208 = DA 1:76). We can also connect *attha, vādī* (in the prec line) here, as alt have “He speaks on meanings, he speaks on teachings, he speaks on the discipline.”

³¹⁷ *Nidhāna, vatim vācam bhāsītā kālena sāpadesam pariyaṇṭa, vatim attha, samhitaṃ. Pariyaṇṭa, vati* means “within limits, well defined.” On “the goal” (*attha*), see n on “speaks on the beneficial” above.

³¹⁸ For similar nn on frivolous chatter (3.4.1.4), see SD 5.7 (2.1) (7).

³¹⁹ *Rāja, katham cora, katham mahāmatta, katham senā, katham bhaya, katham yuddha, katham anna, katham pāna, katham vattha, katham sayana, katham mālā, katham gandha, katham nāti, katham yāna, katham gāma, katham nigama, katham nagara, katham janapada, katham itthi, katham* [Be:Ka & Comy adds *purisa, katham*] *sūra, katham visikhā, katham kumbha-ṭ, thāna, katham pubba, peta, katham nānatta, katham loka-k, khāyikaṃ samudda-k, khāyikaṃ iti, bhavābhava, katham iti vā’ti*. For explanations, see MA 3:221-224; SA 3:294 f.

Tiracchāna,kathā Sutta	S 56.10/5:419 f	SD 65.13	monks told to refrain from such talk
(Dasaka) Kathā,vatthu S 1	A 10.69/:128 f	SD 103.5	monks assembled in a monastery
(Dasaka) Kathā,vatthu S 2	A 10.70/:129 f	SD 103.6	monks assembled in a monastery
Mahā,vagga	Mv 5.6.3 (V 1:188)	—	the group of 6 monks
Vikāla,gāma-p,pavisana			
Sikkhāpada	Pāc 85 (V 4:164)	—	Vinaya rule against such talk

3.5.2.2 The Saṃyutta Commentary interprets the dvandva *bhavābhava* (*bhava* + *abhava*) of *iti,-bhavābhava,kathā* (the last item) respectively as “eternalism” (*sassata*) and “annihilationism” (*uccheda*), “increase” (*vuddhi*) and “decrease” (*hāni*) and “sensual pleasures” (*kāma,sukha*) and “self-mortification” (*atta,kila,matha*).³²⁰ Thus, we have four more kinds of talk—totalling 32 kinds of animal talk.³²¹

3.5.2.3 Why they are called “**animal talk**” (*tiracchāna,kathā*)? The word *tiracchāna* (Skt *tiraś-cīna*) comes from *tiraccha* (cf BHS *tiriccha* and *tiraccha*; Skt *tiraśca* and *tiryāñc*, “horizontal, crooked”) = *tira* (“horizontal”) + *cha* (“going”), that is, not upright. All this evokes the same idea about animals moving horizontally or obliquely, or “crawling” (*samsappati*), as described in **the Saṃsappanīya Pariyāya Sutta** (A 10.205), alluding to those who live immoral lives, such as practising wrong speech.³²²

3.5.2.4 Both **the (Dasaka) Kathā,vatthu Suttas 1 and 2** (A 10.69+70) remind monastics that animal talk is low and speculative by nature. Hence, they are likely to be frivolous and distracting. Instead, declares the Buddha (briefly in the first Sutta and more fully in the second), we should be more concerned with the following “10 topics of discussion” (*kathā,vatthu*), that is to say:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) talk about wanting little, | <i>app'iccha,kathā</i> |
| (2) talk about contentment, | <i>santuṭṭhi,kathā</i> |
| (3) talk about solitude, | <i>paviveka,kathā</i> |
| (4) talk about aloofness from company [not socializing], | <i>asamsagga,kathā</i> |
| (5) talk about arousing energy, | <i>vīriy'ārambha,kathā</i> |
| (6) talk about moral virtue, | <i>sīla,kathā</i> |
| (7) talk about mental concentration, | <i>samādhi,kathā</i> |
| (8) talk about wisdom, | <i>paññā,kathā</i> |
| (9) talk about freedom, | <i>vimutti,kathā</i> |
| (10) talk about the knowledge and vision of freedom | <i>vimutti,ñāṇa,dassana,kathā</i> |

These 10 discussion topics are a stock also listed in **the Ratha,vinīta Sutta** (M 24), **the Mahā Suññata Sutta** (M 122) and **the Kosala Sutta 2** (A 10.30).³²³ In **the Mahā Suññata Sutta** (M 122), this list is preceded by the stock, “Such talk, Ānanda, concerning austerity [effacement], conducting as a support for mind’s release, and that leads to complete disillusionment, to fading away [of lust], to ending [of suffering], to inner peace, to higher knowledge, to self-awakening, to nirvana; that is to say, ...”³²⁴

Some of these qualities are mentioned separately, such as in **the (Kassapa) Jiṇṇa Sutta** (S 16.5), which says that this passage constitutes Mahā Kassapa’s lion-roar regarding his forest-dwelling;³²⁵ so, too, in **the Mahā Gosīṅga Sutta** (M 32), where he describes the ideal monk in the same terms.³²⁶

³²⁰ *Ettha ca bhavoti sassataṃ abhavo'ti ucchedaṃ. Bhavo'ti vuddhi abhavo'ti hāni. Bhavo'ti kāma,sukhaṃ abhavo'ti atta,kilamatho* (SA 3:295).

³²¹ See NmA 2:394; SA 3:295 (*bā-t,timsa tiracchāna,kathā*); VismAṬ:Be 1:148 (*dva-t,timsa tiracchāna,-kathā*).

³²² Cf *samsappati* (“it crawls”), of animals, in **Saṃsappanīya Pariyāya S** (A 10.205,3.2 etc) @ SD 39.7 (1.2.1.2).

³²³ Respectively, M 24,2.3/1:145 (SD 28.3), M 122,12/3:113 (SD 11.4) and A 10.30,9/5:67 (SD 64.15).

³²⁴ *WT Yā ca kho ayam, ānanda, kathā abhisallekkhikā ceto,vinīvaraṇa,sappāyā* [Ce Se Ke *ceto,vicāraṇa,-sappāyā*; Ee *ceto,vivarāṇa,sappāyā*] *ekanta,nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya upasamāya abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya samvattati, seyyath'idam ...* (M 122,12/3:113), SD 11.4. Cf (**Sāriputta**) **Susīma S** (S 2.29/1:63).

³²⁵ S 16.5/2:202 (SD 96.10).

³²⁶ See also **Piṇḍola S** (U 4.6/42 f), SD 27.6a; **Vaṅganta,putta Upasena Tha** (Tha 581).

3.5.3 Speech as skillful means

3.5.3.1 One of the most common skillful means used by the Buddha is right speech. In **the Abhaya Rāja,kumāra Sutta** (M 58), the Buddha declares that he would only use speech that is both truthful and useful, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant.³²⁷ The Buddha will never resort to *lying* when he speaks, certainly not when he teaches.

The skillful means of later Buddhism, especially *where falsehood is justified* (“the end justifies the means”) should be rejected. A notorious case is that of the father in the parable of the burning house in the Lotus Sutra who promised all kinds of fabulous chariots to the children playing inside the burning house, but when they emerged, they found only a simple cart.³²⁸

The Dharma is not the kind of end that would justify the means, for a simple reason: it is not the attaining of *the goal* that changes one. Spiritual change is gradual³²⁹ and occurs *along the path*. Hence, it may be said that it is the path that transforms us, it is the means that justifies the end. It is a path of awakening.

3.5.3.2 When any kind of answer will *not* benefit the listener, the Buddha would famously remain silent. Regarding those matters that have *no answer*, or no useful answer, it is best to remain silent. Such topics, besides the “animal talk” [3.5.3], include the 10 undetermined theses (*avyākata*), such as those stated in **the Cūḷa Māluṅkyā,putta Sutta** (M 63), that is, speculations about whether the world is eternal or not, finite or not; whether the self or soul is the same as the body or different from it; whether a being (especially a fully-awakened saint) after death, exists, or does not exist, or both, or neither.³³⁰

3.5.3.3 In the case of the death of queen Mallikā, when her husband, king Pasenadi asks the Buddha about her destiny—and because of her unwholesome terminal thought, she was reborn in hell for 7 earth-days—the Buddha judiciously remains silent, letting the question pass each time. On the last day, when Mallikā’s bad karma ends and she arises in Tusita heaven, the Buddha answers the king affirmatively.³³¹

3.5.3.4 Most of the time, we know that the Buddha uses pleasant speech, so that even **animals** listening to the Buddha’s sonorous voice, or associating with him, feel comforted on account of his lovingkindness. There is a story about how an elephant and a monkey accompanied and attended to the Buddha while he is in solitary retreat for the rains in the Pārileyya forest. Both the elephant and the monkey, when they die, are reborn in Tāvātimsa heaven.³³²

The Vimāna Vatthu (stories of celestial mansions) tells the story of how once a frog sits entranced listening to the Buddha’s voice while he is teaching. A farmer standing nearby accidentally pierces him to death with his stick. The frog dies and is reborn in Tāvātimsa heaven.³³³

These stories are useful in highlighting the fact that the tone of our voice—how we speak—also counts as a part of right speech. We may say the kindest things in a sarcastic or unhelpful way, or we can say some harsh-sounding advice that is helpful and compassionate. The best is to speak beneficial words in a pleasant tone.

3.5.4 Right and the “goal”

3.5.4.1 Right speech is words spoken that are “connected with the goal” (*attha,samhita*) [3.4.4.2 (7)]. Clearly here, **the goal** (*attha*) must refer to the 3 trainings (*sikkha-t,taya*) of moral virtue, mental concentration and wisdom, that is, of walking the mundane eightfold path in preparation for attaining the supramundane path as at least a streamwinner.

Whatever that is *not* connected with the 3 trainings is unlikely to help us progress along the eightfold path. Indulging in any kind of wrong speech—speech which is not connected with the goal—will

³²⁷ M 58,8 (SD 7.12). See also SD 46.1 (4.5.1).

³²⁸ See *Upāya: Skillful means*, SD 30.8 (5.3).

³²⁹ See SD 21.6 (1).

³³⁰ See **Unanswered questions**, SD 40a.10. For a more general study, see **Silence and the Buddha**, SD 44.1.

³³¹ See **(Mallikā Kāla,kata) Kosala S** (A 5.49) + SD 42.14 (2.3).

³³² See SD 6.1 (3).

³³³ This is the story behind **Maṇḍuka Deva,putta Vimāna Vatthu** (Vv 5.1/852-855) and VvA 216-219: see Reflection R68a, **Animals go to heaven**, 2009. See also Reflection R152, **My influence on the Buddha**, 2010.

not help us progress on the path. This means that we must abstain from animal talk [3.5.3] and speculative debates [3.5.3.2].

3.5.4.2 How do we know when the path we are walking is “right” (*sammā*), that is, heading towards awakening? The simple answer is that we feel joyful about it as our understanding grows with our practice (which includes studying the suttas and listening to the Dharma). There are two important terms that help us appreciate this process: *attha,veda* and *dhamma,veda*.

Attha,veda translates as “joy in meaning,” and *dhamma,veda*, “joy in the teaching.” Recalling the polysemy of Pali terms [2.2.1], we should understand *attha* as having the senses of “meaning” as well as “goal” (or purpose) and “benefit.” The **Dharma** or lower-case dharma gives us both the *meaning* of our quest or practice (for example, what we have studied in the suttas) and *what* we do with this understanding, that is, where we are heading—the the oath of awakening. *Veda* is the joy and inspiration connected with both *attha* and *dhamma*.

Here is the related passage from **the (Anussati) Mahānāma Sutta** (A 11.12) for us to examine:

<p>... the noble disciple, Mahānāma, having directed his mind to the Tathagata, his mind that is straight gains <u>inspired</u> knowledge in the goal; gains <u>inspired</u> knowledge in Dharma; gains <u>gladness</u> connected with Dharma; ...</p>	<p>... <i>tathāgataṃ ārabba, uju,gata,citto kho pana mahānāma ariya,sāvako</i> <i>labhati attha,vedam</i> <i>labhati dhamma,vedam</i> <i>labhati dhammūpasamhitam pāmujjam</i> (A 11.12/5:329,20+330,4 f), SD 99.3³³⁴</p>
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Here is another passage, which shows how any of the 3 jewels—that is, their recollections—can bring us the same joy and inspiration to energize our meditation and fuel our journey on the path:

When that monk is endowed with wise faith
in the Buddha, ... in the Dharma, ... in the Sangha,
he gains inspired knowledge in the goal;
he gains inspired knowledge in the Dharma;
he gains gladness connected with Dharma; ...
(M 7,8/1:37,30-31, 34-35, 1:38,1-3), SD 28.12

3.5.5 Joy of truth and beauty

3.5.5.1 The rule of thumb for Dharma progress is that we enjoy our practice—in fact, we feel happy with everything that is wholesome in and around us. Even the most negative people or event cannot remove that Dharma joy that radiates from us. The joy grows even greater when we discover that there are others who are cultivating this joy, too. Then, we feel the joy of spiritual friendship³³⁵ on the level of common practice, a coming together, a going together, a joyful togetherness (*sāmaggī*) (Dh 194).

3.5.5.2 Imbued with the joyful inspiration of knowing the Dharma (*dhamma,veda*) and joyful inspiration working its purpose (*attha,veda*), whatever we think, speak or do feels joyful, too. This is more precious than the “golden touch” of king Midas of Greek mythology, who sadly turns even his beloved daughter into gold when he touches her.³³⁶ The Dharma touch gives us light and life.

This is the “joyful touch” of the Dharma that **en-joys** (puts joy into) what is in our heart and what is before us, and into the lives that we touch. With this transformative joy, our life is enriched even with whatever worldly activities we engage in that is creative or intellectual in nature. We can now

³³⁴ See also SD 15.2 (4.3).

³³⁵ See **Spiritual friendship: A textual study**, SD 34.1.

³³⁶ Historically, Midas was a king of Phrygia, in west central Anatolia (modern Turkey). His sources are Herodotus’s *Histories* (8.138), Hyginus’s *Fabulae* (191) and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (11.85-193). According to the *Metamorphoses*, Midas rescued the inebriated Silenus, a follower of Dionysus, from peasants who were mistreating him, and gave him hospitality. In gratitude, Dionysus granted Midas a wish. Midas asked for the ability to turn objects to gold with his touch, but he soon regretted his wish when he found he could neither eat nor drink. Dionysus then told Midas to wash himself in the river Pactolus to rid himself of his gift. The cure was successful, and the river later ran with gold. (Facts on File, *Ency of Greek and Roman Mythology*, 2010)

transform any suitable topic that is (was) “animal talk” into Dharma reflections. This becomes a bridge for others new to the Dharma to cross over to explore and taste the Dharma.

3.5.5.3 The books we read, the literature we study, enriches our vision of the Dharma, so that we see everything anew in the Dharma light. What is true and beautiful in literature, poetry, art, music, the work that we do for life, for love and for leisure, shines out with Dharma joy, so that it is all worth doing. These are the 84,000 Dharma doors all open to us. Yet, all we need is just one door, the one that opens into the path to nirvana.

3.5.5.4 When we see others doing this, too, we simply rejoice in it, too. Even when we have done what needs to be done, even not doing anything, not having to do them any more, we feel a sense of calm ease that we now have more time for the Dharma, for life, and to move on up along the joyful eightfold path.

4 Right action (*sammā,kammantā*; Skt *saṃyag,karmānta*)

4.1 BODILY ACTION

4.1.1 When speech is expressed through the body, it becomes **bodily action** (*kammantā*). The usual word for “action” (of body, speech and mind) is simply *kamma*. Clearly here, the *-anta* suffix (meaning “completion, summation”) refers to something more specific: in this case action limited to the body, or even more specifically, the kind of action we do for a living, our work or occupation. However, in the eightfold path setting, this very specific sense of livelihood is covered by the term *ājīva*—to highlight that it is a significant term in itself [5].

4.1.2 Hence, from right speech comes **right action** (*sammā kammantā*), that is, “wholesome bodily action” (*kusala kāyika kamma*). Here again (as in the case of right speech) [3], the components of right action overlap with those of *wholesome bodily actions* of the 10 wholesome courses of karma (*dasa kusala kamma,patha*) [3.4]. Keeping to the same pattern of discussion as that of right speech, we shall start our study by examining wrong action [3.3].

4.1.3 At this early stage, let us first be clear about what a **wrong action** really is. Technically, we can distinguish between outright “bodily action” (*kāyika kamma*) and its more subtle aspects of “bodily intimation” (*kāya,viññatti*), which—in the case of bodily action—refers to *how* we express ourselves, or even including what is *not* expressed, and related aspects of communication.

However, in broad practical terms, “**bodily intimation**” (*kāya,viññatti*) encompasses a full range of both bodily action and any kind of body language or expressions that are karmically motivated, unwholesome or wholesome. In other words, it includes any kind of human action or human-initiated actions and karmic non-action.

An example of karmic non-action is when, say, with an unwholesome mind, we see our nasty short-sighted neighbour walking home on the dimly lit pavement, heading for a deep hole. Instead of shouting out to warn him, we deliberately remain silent and watch him fall into that hole and hurt himself. Although our non-action (not warning him) may arguably be only a “correlation” to but not a *cause* of our neighbour’s fall, our unwholesome state of mind qualifies as bad mental karma.

Another example is that give by the Buddha himself. After queen Mallikā’s death, when her husband, king Pasenadi, asks the Buddha about her rebirth, the Buddha remains silent. He does not want the king to be devastated by the news that she is reborn in hell on account of her dying negative thought. However, after a week, her good karma ripens so that she is reborn in Tusita heaven, and the Buddha informs the king so when he asks after her again [3.5.3.3].

This is, indirectly, right action—certainly, it is wholesomely rooted bodily and mental karma. In the case of the Buddha, however, his actions are non-karmic as he is fully awakened, but we can say they are all acts of compassion, which is here merely an aesthetic statement.

4.2 THE 3 KINDS OF WRONG ACTION

4.2.1 The fourth path-factor—the second in the moral virtue aggregate—right action (*sammā, -kammantā*) comprises the following three precepts, as defined in **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141):

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) refraining from taking life | <i>pāṇātipātā veramaṇī</i> |
| (2) refraining from taking the not-given | <i>adinnādānā veramaṇī</i> |
| (3) refraining from sexual misconduct | <i>kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī</i> |
- (M 141,27/3:251), SD 11.11

4.2.2 It is clear from this list [4.2.1], that the 4 kinds of wrong action overlap with the 4 kinds of unwholesome action of the 10 unwholesome courses of conduct (*akusala kamma,patha*),³³⁷ and their negative counterpart, the 4 kinds of right action, overlap with their positive counterpart in the 10 wholesome courses of conduct (*kusala kamma,patha*).³³⁸

4.3 ABSTAINING FROM WRONG ACTION

The 3 kinds of wrong action

The 3 courses of wrong action to be avoided are defined in **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta** (A 10.206), as follows:

And how, bhikshus, is the defiling fault of **bodily action** due to unwholesome volition, with painful outcome, painful results threefold?

- 2** (1) Here, bhikshus, a certain person harms living beings:
cruel, bloody-handed, given to violence and killing, merciless to living beings.
- (2) Here again, he takes what is not given: in a village or in a forest,³³⁹
by way of theft, he takes the possessions of others that are of service to them
- (3) Here again, he commits sexual misconduct: falling into such a conduct with those
under the care of their mother, under the care of their father,
under the care of their brother, under the care of their sister,
under the care of a relative, one with a husband, one protected by the law,³⁴⁰
even with one adorned with a string of garlands [in betrothal to another].³⁴¹
- (M 41,8) SD 5.7, = (A 10.206,1.4+2), SD 3.9

4.4 THE 3 KINDS OF RIGHT ACTION

4.4.0 Right action is, of course, the opposite of what is stated in the definition of wrong action. We shall examine each of the 3 kinds of right action here, as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|---------|
| (1) refraining from taking life (killing) | [4.4.1] |
| (2) refraining from taking the not-given | [4.4.2] |
| (3) refraining from sexual misconduct | [4.4.3] |

³³⁷ On the 10 unwholesome courses of action (*dasa akusala kamma,patha*), see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,7-10) SD 5.7; **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,1-7) SD 3.9.

³³⁸ On the 10 wholesome courses of action (*dasa kusala kamma,patha*), see **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41,11-14), SD 5.7; **Sañcetanika S** (A 10.206,7.2-12), SD 3.9.

³³⁹ “In a village or in a forest,” *gāma,gatam vā araṇṇa’gatam vā*, lit, “gone to the village or gone to the forest.”

³⁴⁰ Comy: “This penalty is placed in connection with a village, house or street, thus: ‘Whoever goes to such and such a woman gets such a penalty’—this is called *sa,paridaṇḍā* (MA 2:330). This apparently refers to those places where prostitution is illegal. In modern terms, this rule also covers “wards of the court,” ie, minors involved in some kind of legal process or adjudication.

³⁴¹ These “protected women” are listed as ten in the Vinaya as *mātā,rakkhitā, pitu,rakkhitā, mātā,pitu,rakkhitā, bhātura,rakkhitā, bhaginī,rakkhitā, ñāti,rakkhitā, gotta,rakkhitā* (those protected by the clan), *dhamma,rakkhitā* (those protected by custom), *sārakkhā* (those “under (natural) protection”, ie, the betrothed [*mālā,guṇa,parirakkhitā*] and married women [*sa-s,sāmikā*], incl women of the royal harem), *sa,paridaṇḍā* (V3:139). The “one with a husband” and “one who has been garlanded in betrothal to another” of **Sāleyyaka S** (M 41) come under the category of *sārakkhā* in the Vinaya. On *sa,paridaṇḍā*, see prec n.

We shall now go on to examine how the Commentaries list the criteria (*sambhāra*) for each of the three kinds of wrong action.

4.4.1 Refraining from taking life

4.4.1.1 Killing, that is, “destroying living beings” (*pāṇātipātā*) means technically cutting off (*atipāta*) of the breath or life-force (*pāṇa*; Skt *prāṇa*) of a living being. Here a “living being” (*pāṇa*) is, in the conventional sense, a being (*satta*); in the ultimate sense, it is the life-faculty (*jīvit'indriya*).

4.4.1.2 There are these 5 constituents (*sambhāra*) of killling a living being.³⁴²

- (1) a living being (that is, a being with breath and consciousness),
- (2) the awareness that it is a living being,
- (3) the intention to kill,
- (4) the effort, and
- (5) the consequent death of the being.³⁴³

4.4.1.3 Constituent (1) refers to a reasonable awareness of the intended victim. However, even when we kill the wrong person, the karma of killing is still complete—the fact remains that it is a living being that we have killed (not *whom* we have killed).

The term, “single-facultied life-form” (*ek'indriya jīva*), is often found in both the early texts and the commentaries in reference to plant life,³⁴⁴ which is understood to have only a sense of “touch.”³⁴⁵ Therefore, it is not included in the karmic constituents of killing. However, there are Vinaya rules which forbid monastics from polluting (with waste) or harming plant-life and the environment, and from digging the earth for any reason.

Microorganisms such as bacteria, too, are not defined as “living” in this karmic sense. Hence, boiling water to “kill” them is not regarded as breaking the first of the 5 precepts.

4.4.1.4 Killing is wrong because life is of the highest value to all living beings, especially those with higher intelligence.³⁴⁶ To destroy life is to destroy the chances of the being gaining awakening (overcoming suffering).³⁴⁷

4.4.2 Refraining from taking the not-given

4.4.2.1 Stealing or, more technically, “taking the not-given” (*adinnādāna*) is the removal (*ādāna*) of what is not given (*adinna*), that is, it is another’s property, and appropriating it by theft, deceit or other means, with a knowledge of this, whether we do this ourself or through someone else or by any other means.

Here, “the not-given” is the possession that another rightfully “receives through work and zeal, gathers by the strength of his arms, earns by the sweat of his brow, and justly obtains by right means.” On our part, when we ourself have such rightful property, we diligently protect it so that “kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not wash it away, unloving heirs would not take it away.”³⁴⁸ In protecting our wealth in this way, we, too, prevent such people from creating bad karma by taking what is not rightfully theirs.

³⁴² These nn on killling are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (1). For technical details, see comy of the 3rd defeat (*pārājika*) rule (Pārājika 3 = V 3:68-86).

³⁴³ This list of criteria on killling is from comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at **MA 1:198**.

³⁴⁴ V 1:137 f 3:156 4:34 = SnA 1:3 f = DhA 3:302 4:296.

³⁴⁵ In modern botany, this includes characteristics such as taxis, a locomotor response toward or away from an external stimulus by a motile (and usually simple) organism. In other words, plants can only respond to external stimuli (presence and changes), such as light (phototropism), water (hygroscopy) and heat, in predictable ways.

³⁴⁶ On values in relation to the precepts, see SD 1.5 (2.7+8).

³⁴⁷ These nn (3.4.1.1+2) on killing are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (1).

³⁴⁸ **Digha,jānu S** (A 8.54,5), SD 5.10. For a list of ways that families and wealth are destroyed, see (**Asi,ban-dhaka,putta**) **Kulā S** (S 42.9,10/4:324), SD 7.11. Cf **Cūḷa Dukkha-k,khandha S** (M 14,9/1:92), SD 4.7. For greater surety of our wealth, see (**Pañcaka**) **Sappurisa Dāna S** (A 5.148), SD 22.15 (2(5)).

4.4.2.2 These are the 5 constituents of taking the not-given.³⁴⁹

- (1) another's property,
- (2) the awareness that it is another's property,
- (3) the intention to steal,
- (4) the effort, and
- (5) the consequent removal of the object.³⁵⁰

Stealing is the removal or enjoyment of any property that rightfully belongs to others, especially on which their lives and those they support depend. Effectively, stealing is taking away the happiness of others, since our property is meant to bring us happiness.³⁵¹

4.4.3 Refraining from sexual misconduct

4.4.3.1 Sexual misconduct is, technically, “misconduct in sensual pleasures” (*kāmesu micchā-cāra*). Here, “sensual pleasures” (*kāmesu*) refers specifically to sexual intercourse. “Misconduct” refers to any transgression by way of any of the bodily “doors” or orifices. In broad terms, it refers to any violation of the person of another (regardless of sex), especially in non-consensual intercourse or sexual exploitation of minors and the vulnerable, such as the reported child abuse by the Christian church clergy.³⁵²

4.4.3.2 We have already noted [4.3.0] that discourses such as **the Sāleyyaka Sutta** (M 41) and **the Sañcetanika Sutta** (A 10.206) specify the kinds of individuals who should not be violated or sexualized in any way, that is to say:

- (1) minors (children and those below the age of consent);
- (2) those betrothed to another (committed to another or engaged to be married);
- (3) those protected by the law or the state (such as wards of the state);³⁵³
- (4) those who are married (that is, extramarital sex);
- (5) those bound by vows (such as monastics and celibates); and
- (6) those who do not give their consent.

4.4.3.3 There are 4 constituents of sexual misconduct:

- (1) a forbidden person (any of the four mentioned above);
- (2) the mind to enjoy;
- (3) the effort to engage; and
- (4) enjoying the object, or consenting to the union of sexual organs.³⁵⁴

Technically, sexual misconduct is said to have occurred when one has a bad intention and does it with a “forbidden” partner or victim: this is merely the “respect for another’s *person*.” However, the essence of the precept against sexual misconduct is that of “respect for another.” In other words, even when our spouse or lover declines to have a relationship, for any reason, we must respect that refusal.³⁵⁵ Otherwise, it amounts to breaking this precept of natural morality.³⁵⁶

³⁴⁹ These nn on stealing are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (2). For details, see comy of the 2nd defeat (*pārājika*) rule (Pārājika 2 = V 3:41-67).

³⁵⁰ This list of criteria on stealing is from comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at MA 1:198 f.

³⁵¹ These nn (3.4.1.1+2) on stealing are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (2).

³⁵² See SD 64.17 (10).

³⁵³ See §8 n in ref to “one protected by the law” (*sa,paridaṇḍa*) (M 41.8(3)/1:286), SD 5.7.

³⁵⁴ Comy on Sammā Ditṭhi S (M 9) at MA 1:200. Comy adds that if the unwilling victim gives “consent” (*adhivāsana*) during the course of union, the victim would thereby break the precept, too (MA 1:199). Technically, in such cases, the precept is broken only when the person is a *forbidden* one. If the erstwhile unwilling partner (who midway consents) is a free adult, then he or she does not break the precept.

³⁵⁵ On the spouse’s part, it would be wise not to withhold one’s affections as a means of punishing the other spouse. The point here is that we should not treat anyone merely as chattel or a sexual object, but our intimacy is done with love and learning from one another. See Reflection, **To love is to learn**, R282, 2013.

³⁵⁶ These nn (4.4.3) on sexual misconduct are from SD 5.7 (2.1) (3). See further **Sexuality**, SD 31.7. On natural morality (*pakati sīla*), see SD 30.8 (8.4.2.2); SD 37.8 (2); SD 40a.1 (13.2).

4.4.3.4 With **secularism and careerism** rising, even seemingly respectable, amongst Buddhist monastics today, the Buddha’s warning to monastics not to lose touch with their celibacy and spirituality is most timely. Of special note should be his warning against the 4 dangers to the holy life, that is,

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| (1) the danger of waves, | <i>ūmi, bhaya</i> | anger and despair towards the training |
| (2) the danger of crocodiles, ³⁵⁷ | <i>kumbhīla, bhaya</i> | “belly-filling” or lack of moderation in food |
| (3) the danger of whirlpools, and | <i>āvatta, bhaya</i> | being caught up in sensual pleasures, wealth |
| (4) the danger of river dolphins | <i>susukā, bhaya</i> | indulging in socializing and sex |
- (M 67,14-20), SD 34.7³⁵⁸

4.4.3.5 In the **Methuna Sutta** (A 7.47), the Buddha warns monastics against indulging in any kind of sexual act, even indirect or “disguised” sex, such as,

- (1) enjoying being rubbed, massaged, bathed and kneaded by others;
- (2) joking with others, playing with them, jesting with them, especially with women;
- (3) gazing and looking sensuously at others, especially the opposite sex or with intimate intent;
- (4) listening to lay people, especially women as they talk, laugh, sing or weep;
- (5) recalling their own sensual experiences before they became monastics;
- (6) enjoying watching lay people being entertained, showered or serviced with sensual pleasures;
- (7) aspiring to be reborn in the heavens amongst devas. (A 7.47), SD 21.9

The point is clear that monastics—monks or nuns, and those keeping the celibacy precept—should abstain from any kind of sex and any kind of sensual pleasures because these will surely distract them from their practice, weaken their resolve for awakening in this life, and lose touch with the purpose of the holy life—why they have renounced the world in the first place.³⁵⁹

4.4.4 Crooked lives

4.4.4.1 Those who habitually follow the wrong path—practising wrong view, wrong thought, wrong speech and wrong action—are described in **the Samsappanīya Pariyāya Sutta** (A 10.205) in bestial terms, as “crawlers,” thus:

He crawls with his body; he crawls with his speech; he crawls with his mind.

His bodily action is crooked; his verbal action is crooked; his mental action is crooked; his destiny is crooked; [290] his rebirth is crooked.

Furthermore, bhikshus, for those whose destiny is crooked, I say, there is either of two destinies,

that is, utter suffering in hell, or in an animal womb as those that crawl.

And what, bhikshus, is the animal womb, those that crawl?

Snakes, scorpions, centipedes, mongooses, cats, rats, owls, or whatever beings born of the animal womb that crawls away on seeing humans.

Such indeed it is, bhikshus, a being’s rebirth is due to the being [to his past].

As he acts, so he is reborn. When reborn, sense-contacts touch him.

So I say, bhikshus, ‘Beings are heirs to karma.’ (A 10.205,3 etc; refrain), SD 39.7

4.4.4.2 The wordplay on “crawlers” (*samsappanīya*) is very clear. When people indulge in the sexual act or sensual pleasures they assume various indecorous postures, and either do this in secret (like wild animals) or do this shamelessly and openly (like domesticated animals). For monastics to indulge in such conduct, the wrong and bad karma is not only in the acts themselves, but also in their pretences and brazen display of goodness and holiness when they are not really recluses at all.

³⁵⁷ Invoked in **Sumedhā Thī**: *sara kumbhīla, bhayāni ca*, “remember the dangers of crocodiles” (Thī 502).

³⁵⁸ These 4 warnings and their parables recur in **Ūmi Bhaya S** (A 4.122), SD 47.9.

³⁵⁹ On celibacy, see SD 31.7 (6).

4.4.4.3 In the **Pahārāda Sutta**, the Buddha, in his famous parables of the great ocean, declares:

Pahārāda, just as the great ocean does not associate with the dead, a carcass: whatever that is dead, a carcass, the great ocean would quickly carry it to shore, wash it onto the land³⁶⁰—so, too, Pahārāda, *the sangha does not associate with a person who is immoral*, of bad character, of impure and suspicious conduct, secretive in deeds, not a recluse but pretending to be one, incelibate but pretending to be celibate,³⁶¹ rotten to the core, lustful and filthy by nature³⁶²—the sangha communes³⁶³ not with such a one, but having quickly assembled, it expels him.³⁶⁴

Even though he sits in the midst of the sangha, yet he is far away from the sangha, and the sangha is far away from him.³⁶⁵ (A 8.19,13.1-2), SD 45.18³⁶⁶

4.5 BEING HUMAN

4.5.1 Most selfish, most time-consuming

4.5.1.1 Sensual pleasures and sexuality are closely associated with lay people—those of the world. The very nature of sensual pleasure is rooted in a fixation with the physical body, and the very nature of **sexuality** is the procreation of the physical body. Our whole species is rooted and thrives in the sexual act, and yet sex is the “most selfish” of human acts³⁶⁷ and very “time-consuming.”

4.5.1.2 The (**Devatā**) **Samiddhi Sutta** (S 1.20) records how the young monk Samiddhi admonishes a female deity, who is in love with him, on the fleeting nature of worldly life:

For, avuso, the Blessed One has declared that **sense-pleasures are time-consuming, full of suffering, full of despair and great is the danger therein**³⁶⁸—while this Dharma is visible right here, immediate, inviting us to come and see, accessible, to be personally known by the wise.³⁶⁹ (S 1.20,5), SD 21.4

4.5.2 A pleasure not to be feared

4.5.2.1 The **Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36) recounts the most important realization and decision that the Bodhisattva Gotama makes that change the course of our religious history. The Bodhisattva actually realizes, not one, but *two* vital truths:

- (1) the first realization is that neither sensual indulgence nor self-mortification brings awakening. Avoiding these two extremes, he realizes that there is a “middle way,” and this is rooted in his second realization:
- (2) how he enjoyed the 1st dhyana³⁷⁰ in the shade of a jambul tree, when he was still very young, probably only 7 years old.³⁷¹ Of this momentous and beautiful experience, he declares:

³⁶⁰ Alluded to at Miln 1:188, 2:250.

³⁶¹ Or, “Not living the holy life (*brahma, cariya*), but pretending to do so.”

³⁶² *Evam evaṃ kho pahārāda yo so puggalo dussīlo pāpa, dhammo asuci, saṅka-s, sara, samācāro paṭicchanna, -kammanto assamaṇo samaṇa, paṭiñño abrahmacārī brahmacārī, paṭiñño anto, pūti avassuto kasambu, jāto.* §13.2 up to here recurs in **Aggi-k, khandhūpama S** (A 7.68/4:134), SD 89.12.

³⁶³ “Communes” or “to be in communion” (*saṃvasati*). Technically (according to Vinaya), he is not part of the monastic community: *saṃvāsa* def at V 4:315; *saṃvasati* def at V 4:138, 214. See also Pāc 69 (V 4:137).

³⁶⁴ *Na tena saṅgho saṃvasati, khippam eva naṃ sannipatitvā ukkhipati.* The vb **ukkkhipati** can also mean “to suspend” (V 2:61, 4:309; Pug 33).

³⁶⁵ *Kiñcāpi so hoti majjhe bhikkhu, saṅghassa sannisinno, atha kho so ārakā’va saṅghamhā saṅgho ca tena.* Cf **Saṅghāṭi, kaṇṇā S** (It 92,2/91), SD 24.10a.

³⁶⁶ See also **Satta Jaṭila S** (S 3.11,14), on the difficulty of recognizing such false recluses (SD 14.11).

³⁶⁷ SD 31.7 (6.2) & SD 32.2 (3.1.3).

³⁶⁸ *Kālikā hi āvuso kāmā vuttā bhagavatā bahu, dukkhā bah’upāyasā ādīnavo ettha bhīyo.*

³⁶⁹ In **Sambahula S** (S 4.21), when Māra (in the form of a venerable brahmin) offers the same cryptic advice to a group of young monks (to enjoy their youth before the spiritual life), they reply in identical words as Samiddhi’s (S 4.21/1:117 f) + SD 24.1 (2.1).

³⁷⁰ On the significance of the Bodhisattva’s “1st dhyana,” see SD 49.4 (6.2).

³⁷¹ See **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31), SD 49.4.

‘I fear not the pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual desires and unwholesome states!’³⁷²
It is the Bodhisattva’s conclusion that dhyana is a pleasure “not to be feared,” which leads to his subsequent liberating meditation and full awakening.³⁷³

4.5.3 Healthy enjoyment of sensual pleasures

4.5.3.1 Despite the lay life being rooted in sensual pleasures and sexuality, it is still possible for those of us who indulge ourselves in sensual pleasures (*kāma, bhogī*) to live the spiritual life. This idea of **lay spirituality** is possible when we understand the difference between “enjoying” and “indulging” in such pleasures and sexuality.

Essentially, when such laity, moderated by the spirit of the 5 precepts, “**enjoy**” worldly pleasures, *they know when to stop* and are able to practise self-restraint when they need to. To “**indulge**” in such worldly pleasures means (1) that we are never really satisfied with them, and so keep on desiring more of them, simply because we do not really know how to enjoy them; and (2) we have taken the vow of celibacy (as monastics, renunciants and observants), and so, to indulge in sensual pleasures is to break the celibacy precept and go against the spirit of the holy life. [1.6.2.1]

To say the least, we have been untrue to ourself, and become a “thief” in the teaching.³⁷⁴ Our destiny, for such wrong views, is surely either the darkness of the animal world or the violence of the hell states.

4.5.3.2 The key reason for the happiness of the lay practitioners who engage in sensuality—the *kāma, bhogī*—and yet are able to live the holy life and taste its fruits, is because they constantly reflect on impermanence. When we understand that our body and sensuality are both impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise, then we can also understand how they bring us suffering and that they have no essence of any kind.

Hence, rightly enjoying sensuality in this way—guided by the 5 precepts—we are still able to practise for streamwinning, and attain it in this life itself. The attaining of streamwinning, or perhaps, even once-returning, empowers us to have more self-restraint and spiritual strength to accept ourself as we age and lose the faculty for enjoying such sensuality, so that we willingly and ably, readily and happily, turn to “progressively higher distinction” (*ulāraṃ pubbenāparaṃ viśesaṃ*).³⁷⁵

5 Right livelihood (*sammā, ājīva*; Skt *saṃyag, ājīva*)³⁷⁶

5.1 WHAT IS RIGHT LIVELIHOOD?

5.1.1 Right livelihood in perspective

5.1.1.1 Human society has three basic and vital aspects: the social, the political and the economic. Firstly, there is society proper or social realities involving the majority, or all, of the people. Then, there is the political system and beliefs that hold society together, usually in the hands of a powerful elite, or an authority sanctioned by some social or traditional means.

This concentration of power is usually in the hands of a single person (such as a king or potentate), which is common in the Buddha’s time, or, more commonly today, an authoritative body, such as a parliament or a council of leaders who legitimately rule over society. Finally, there is the economic

³⁷² *Na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññatt’ eva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi* (M:Ee 1:247,3; M:Ce 1: 584,4 and M:Se 1:458,5: *yantaṃ*, after which Se continues directly with *aññatr’eva*, omitting *sukhaṃ*). On the 2 kinds of pleasures—sensual pleasure and the pleasure of renunciation—see **Araṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 139,9.3), SD 7.8. On pleasure experienced by the awakened mind, see **Uṇṇābha S** (S 51.15), SD 10.10.

³⁷³ See **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36,31-32/1:246 f), SD 49.4.

³⁷⁴ On a renunciant as “thief” in the teaching, see **Arahatta Susīma S** (S 12.70,58), SD 16.8; SD 45.18 (2.3.-3.2) almsfood; SD 49.2 (1.1.3) recluses.

³⁷⁵ This refers to attaining the path, in this life itself, of at least streamwinning. See **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89,-12 + 18) SD 64.10; **Bhikkhuṇī Vāsaka S** (S 47.10,3), SD 24.2 & **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118,2+6), SD 7.13.

³⁷⁶ The main doctrinal aspects of right livelihood have been discussed in **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8. It is helpful to read through SD 37.8 at least once before going through section 5, as it assumes you have a basic doctrinal understanding of RL.

order that sustains the system, encourages and regulates economic growth, and defines and distributes the wealth of nations.

5.1.1.2 The teachings of early Buddhism address all these three aspects of human society, especially in the context of ancient Indian life.³⁷⁷ According to the dominant brahminical teachings then, our social status or class (*vaṇṇa*, “colour”) was dependent on our birth. So, we were born brahmin and thus enjoyed priestly—the highest class—privileges. The other classes—the kshatriyas (warriors and nobles), the vaishyas (merchants) and shudras (menial workers)—were to serve and enrich the brahmins. Furthermore, we were born into a trade: if we were born into a potter’s family, we would be potters. There was, as a rule, no social mobility. The dark-skinned local natives were “unclassed” (rejected from society itself) as outcastes.

Discourses such as **the Aggañña Sutta** (D 27), **the Tevijja Sutta** (D 13) and **the Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (M 98) record ground-breaking teachings clearly showing the Buddha’s utter rejection of Brahmanism as a theistic religion and its social teachings, especially about the caste system and priestly ritualism.³⁷⁸ However, Brahmanism was able to counter much of the Buddha’s reformative teachings, and it exists to this day.³⁷⁹ Such Suttas and many more exhort human effort in spiritual development, personal responsibility through karma, and the efficacy of empirical and verifiable wisdom instead of blind faith in brahminical teachings.

There are even Hindu political extremists today who are trying to use a revisionist Hindu political ideology of *Hindutvā* (“Hinduness”), claiming that Buddhism has always been merely a part of “Hinduism.”³⁸⁰ If this ideology is authoritatively enforced, it would be the loss of Buddhism to millions of *dalit* (outcaste) in India today.

5.1.1.3 Although Buddhism has sophisticated teachings for society as a whole, unlike the more “power”-based religions, it has never, by itself, defined the social, political or economic realities of society. More often, as we witness throughout history, the powers of the time—such as pre-modern Asian empires, especially those of China, Korea, Japan and Tibet—have used Buddhism to legitimize their position and consolidate their power.

In doing so, Buddhism was often given the benefits of being a state religion or various worldly benefits, but the cost was always that Buddhism would be defined, or at least regulated, by those worldly powers. Yet, the paths of glory—even Buddhist glory—led but to the grave, or a premature death with the fall of these empires.³⁸¹

5.1.1.4 Today, where Buddhism once enjoyed imperial patronage, worldly support and widespread influence—especially in China, Korea and Japan—Buddhism has invariably suffered the Ozymandias syndrome,³⁸² and been reduced mostly to magnificent old temples and majestic sacred mountains, some half-forgotten local words, witty sayings and quaint cultural oddities. The fate of such “power” Buddhism rose and fell with the very power that propped them.

Even in Tibet today, the priestly royalty of the “incarnate” lamas, whose power and wealth grew phenomenally from the 12th century onwards through Mongol patronage, were forced to flee when the Chinese “liberated” Tibet in 1951. Theravada Buddhism, on the other hand, is traditionally believed to have first arrived in Southeast Asia in Asoka’s time (around 2nd century BCE), but this was interrupted by an interlude of Mahāyāna influence from the 5th to 8th centuries. Today, Theravāda continues to exist, even thrive, in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and South-east Asia generally.

³⁷⁷ See, eg, U Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, Oxford, 1987 & J Auboyer, *Daily Life in Ancient India*, London, 1962.

³⁷⁸ Respectively, D 27 (SD 2.19); D 13 (SD 1.8); M 98 = Sn 3.9 (SD 37.1).

³⁷⁹ On some such countering measures by the brahmins, see Piya Tan, *History of Buddhism*, ch 1 “Buddhism in India,” 2005: §30.

³⁸⁰ The earliest record we have of the term “Hindu” used in a religious sense was in the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang’s *Records of the Western Regions* (7th cent). According to Gavin Flood, the word “Hindu” first occurred as “a Persian geographical term for the people who lived beyond the river Indus (Skt, *sindhū*), in a 6th-century BCE inscription of Darius I (A Sharma, “On Hindu, Hindustān, Hinduism and Hindutvā,” *Numen* 49,1, 2002:1-36). The Arabic equivalent *Al-Hind* likewise referred to ancient India as a country (not a religion) (id; R Thapar, *Penguin History of Early India*, 2003:8). See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu>.

³⁸¹ See, eg, **How Buddhism became Chinese**, SD 40b.

³⁸² See Shelley’s *Ozymandias*, poem & comy: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/guide/238972#poem>.

5.1.1.5 All this shows how the three aspects of society—the social, the political and the economic—are closely intertwined. More broadly, then, we *are* social beings; we are what we *do*; we are how we *work*. What we are, what we do and how we work are all intimately interlinked as how we live or our **livelihood** on a worldly level. Buddhism offers us a way to cultivate this livelihood on a spiritual level as “right livelihood.” In this sense, right livelihood is the basis for the good society itself.

In other words, all these three qualities—the social, the political and the economic—interact and overlap as the factors of the moral aggregate, comprising right speech [3], right action [4] and right livelihood. In fact, all this is implied in the polysemic Pali term *kamma* (Skt *karma*), anglicized as “karma.” In karmic terms, right livelihood (RL) is most dynamic: it actively involves both right speech and right action. And because of this dynamic aspect of RL, it needs to be dealt with on its own.

5.1.2 Right livelihood as a mundane path-factor

5.1.2.1 Right livelihood is the fifth of the eight path-factors, and the third and last factor of the moral virtue aggregate (*sīla-k,khandha*), completing that aggregate, as it were. **The (Magga) Vibh-aṅga Sutta** (S 45.8) defines right livelihood simply as follows:

And what, bhikshus, is **right livelihood**?

Here, bhikshus, a noble disciple, having abandoned wrong livelihood, supports himself through right livelihood.³⁸³

This, bhikshus, is called right livelihood.

(S 45.8), SD 14.5

“Wrong livelihood” involves wrong social conduct, bad political behaviour, and unbeneficial economic realities. Having discovered what these components of wrong livelihood are, we can go on to correct them, and evolve through right livelihood, which is a synecdoche (a shorthand) for our whole moral training (*sīla,sikkhā*) [1.6.2]

5.1.2.2 Another helpful way of way of seeing this process of **human evolution** is that we are evolving from being “social beings” to becoming social individuals. We are able to *rightly* act for ourself, become true individuals—a process more fully cultivated under the aggregate of mental cultivation (*samādhi,sikkhā*) [1.6.4]. Here, right livelihood prepares us, on a mundane level, to learn to live happily and productively for ourself and for others.

5.1.2.3 The most basic process that defines a happy and productive social individual is given in **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** (A 8.54) as being accomplished on the *worldly* level by way of these 4 accomplishments (*sampadā*):

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| (1) The accomplishment of diligence | <i>uṭṭhāna,sampadā</i> | rightly earning a living; |
| (2) The accomplishment of watchfulness | <i>ārakkha,sampadā</i> | protecting and enjoying our wealth |
| (3) Spiritual friendship | <i>kalyāṇa,mittatā</i> | properly fulfilling our social duties |
| (4) Balanced living | <i>sama,jīvitā</i> | practising <u>right livelihood</u> |

5.1.2.4 The Sutta continues by defining each of these 4 qualities. Of immediate relevance to us here is, of course, the fourth, the accomplishment of balance living, defined thus:

What is balanced living (*sama,jīvitā*)?

Here, Vyagghapajja, the son of family,
knowing his income and expenses, lives within his means,
being neither extravagant nor stingy,
considering thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses,
but not his expenses in excess of his income.

Just as a scalesman,³⁸⁴ or his apprentice, knows, on holding up the scales, that by so much it has dipped down, by so much it has tilted up—
even so, a son of family, knowing his income and expenses, lives within his means,
being neither extravagant nor stingy,

³⁸³ For a special study, see **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8. For a detailed commentary on right livelihood, see Vism 1.61-82/23-30.

³⁸⁴ *Tulā,dhāra*, lit, “scale-bearer.”

considering thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses,
but not his expenses in excess of his income. (A 8.54), SD 5.10³⁸⁵

5.1.2.5 Of special interest to us here is the phrase “(he) lives within his means” (*samaṃ jīvikam kappeti*), or “he is one who lives within his means.” The word *sama* also means “harmonious,” and here overlaps with *kusala*, “skillful, wholesome.” In a narrow worldly sense, we should live a balanced life, enjoying ourselves within our means. On a broader worldly level, it means we should ensure how we live—how we work and enjoy life—does not, in any way, harm us, harm others, or the environment. This is the “golden rule” of right livelihood. [5.1.2.4]

5.1.2.6 This important criterion of a quality life is known as **the golden rule**, which, put in a Buddhist way, says: “Do not do to others what we do not want others to do to us.” The shortest version of this golden rule is given in **the (Dhamma,desaka) Udāyī Sutta** (A 5.159) as “neither harming oneself nor others” in all our actions.³⁸⁶

A fuller version of the golden rule—which applies to all our actions—is taught by the Buddha to young Rāhula in **the Amba,Jaṭṭhika Rāhul’ovāda Sutta** (M 61), that is, before acting, we should reflect, thus: “Will it harm me, or harm others, or harm both?”³⁸⁷ Only when all three criteria are fulfilled, can we act accordingly. This is the golden rule of Buddhist ethics.

5.1.2.7 Then, there is the famous “**3 points of utter purity**” (*ti,koṭi,parisuddhi*)—the golden rule of moral conduct. This is given in **the Veḷu,dvāreyya Sutta** (S 55.6), where a wholesome action should be “purified” in three ways, that is, by observing the precepts oneself, by exhorting others to observe them, and by praising (thus encouraging others to practise) such deeds. More specifically, keeping the precepts, the golden rule of moral conduct, implies that:

- we should keep the precepts ourselves,
- we should encourage others to do the same, and
- we should “speak in praise” of keeping the precepts.³⁸⁸

5.1.2.8 The Dhammika Sutta (Sn 2.14), frames the golden rule apophatically (in negative language), as follows:

<i>Pāṇam na hane, na ca ghātayeyya na cānujaññā hanatam paresam</i>	Let one not destroy life, nor cause to kill, nor approve of killing by others,
<i>sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya danḍam ye thāvarā ye ca tasanti loke</i>	Laying aside the rod [violence] toward all beings, both the still and the moving in the world. (Sn 394)

This stanza gives the essence of the 5 precepts (Sn 393-99). The key term here is “the three-pointed utter purity” or simply “the threefold purity” (*ti,koṭi,parisuddha*) which entails:

- (1) not breaking the precept oneself,
- (2) not causing another to do so, and
- (3) not approving of any breach of the precept.³⁸⁹

5.1.2.9 All these versions of the golden rule help define “right livelihood”: living and enjoying life within our means, without harming oneself, others or the environment.³⁹⁰ We will now examine this in some detail.³⁹¹

³⁸⁵ On the 5 uses of wealth, see **Ādiya S** (A 5.41), SD 2.1.

³⁸⁶ *Attānañ ca parañ ca anupahacca* (A 5.159/3:184), SD 46.1.

³⁸⁷ *Atta,vyābādhāya pi ... para,vyābādhāya pi ... ubhaya,vyābādhāya pi samvatteyya* (M 61,9 etc), SD 3.10. The common key word here, *vyābādhā*, means “distress, pain, affliction.”

³⁸⁸ S 55.7,6-12 + SD 1.5 (1+3).

³⁸⁹ Cf SnA 376 f; S 5:354 f.

³⁹⁰ On the threefold purity, further see SD 1.5 (3).

³⁹¹ On the right livelihood precepts, see (1.6.2.2 f).

5.2 THE 3 LEVELS OF WORLDLY LIVELIHOOD

5.2.0 Profession, occupation, vocation

5.2.0.1 Our life today is more complicated than life in the Buddha's day. However, if we understand his teachings as he intends them, then, we will be able to appreciate that there is **livelihood** on the worldly level and on the Dharma level. On the worldly level, there is both wrong livelihood (which needs to be corrected or improved) and right livelihood (which is basically not against the Dharma).

5.2.0.2 On the Dharma level, there can be only "right livelihood" or even "perfect livelihood," for a better term, which conduces to our life on the path. Here, then, it helps if we see livelihood under the categories of profession [5.2.1], vocation [5.2.2] and occupation [5.2.3].

5.2.1 Profession

5.2.1.1 The 5 types of wrong professions are given in **the Vanijja Sutta** (A 5.177), as follows:³⁹²

A lay follower should not engage in 5 kinds of trades. Which are the five?

Trading in weapons, trading in humans, trading in meat, trading in intoxicants and trading in poison. These are the 5 kinds of trades that a lay follower should not engage in.³⁹³

(A 5.177), SD 37.8

5.2.1.2 A profession, in livelihood terms, is a very specialized gainful employment, especially one in which we are well-trained and by which we earn a living.³⁹⁴ Such professions exist even during the Buddha's time. By "profession" today, we usually understand it as a prestigious, well-paying job of someone who is a well-qualified specialist in his field. The common quality that the professionals of the Buddha's time and those of today share is that they are both specialists in their respective fields. Whether as professions or the mere act of "trading" (an incidental act of selling, or even distributing) weapons, humans, meat, intoxicants or poison, is regarded as indulging in a wrong trade.³⁹⁵

5.2.2 Occupation

5.2.2.1 We have, for the purpose of our discussion so far, classified human work activities into profession [5.2.1], occupation [5.2.2] and vocation [5.2.3]. **Occupation** is a general term for any kind of job or profession, or, simply what we are occupied with, and by which we support ourselves.

In the context of right livelihood, the term "occupation" refers to whatever activity we are meaningfully engaged in. This means that such an activity should give meaning to our life beyond the fact that we are gainfully employed by it. This term is useful in deducing how our mental health is affected by our work or profession. In short, while we may ask of someone's work or profession, "What is your work or profession?"—here we would ask, "How is your work or profession?"

5.2.2.2 Some kinds of jobs we have may not appear to affect us in any negative way, but they do affect *others* negatively by way of increasing their **greed, hate, delusion or fear**.³⁹⁶ Such occupations as those that involve the advertising industry or the production of luxury goods that people do not really need are greed-based because it involves somehow persuading us that we should *want* such goods or services.

Loan-sharking, for its part, entails paying our loans at high interests, and we are, as a rule, threatened with *violence*, even death, if we fail to make the repayments. In this sense, it is hate-based.

Delusion-based occupations essentially work on conning others with false or inflated benefits of our products or services, such as fortune-telling. A significant wrong with such occupations is that they encourage us (the customers) to externalise our locus of control³⁹⁷ instead of relying on self-effort, patience and wisdom.

³⁹² A more detailed discussion on the 5 wrong trades is found in **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (5.2).

³⁹³ *Pañc'ime bhikkhave vaṇijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā, Katame pañca. Sattha, vaṇijjā satta, vaṇijjā maṃsa, vaṇijjā majja, vaṇijjā visa, vaṇijjā. Imā kho bhikkhave pañca vaṇijjā upāsakena akaraṇīyā'ti.*

³⁹⁴ On professionalism in the right livelihood context (in terms of the 4 divine abodes), see SD 37.8 (2.5).

³⁹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the 5 wrong professions, see **Right livelihood**, SD 37.8 (5.2).

³⁹⁶ The negative qualities are the 4 biases (*agati*): see **Sigal'ovāda S** (D 31,4+5) SD 4.1; **Agati S 1** (A 4.17) SD 89.7; **Saṅgaha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4) n, SD 2.21; SD 31.12 (6.4.1.3).

³⁹⁷ On the locus of control, see SD 17.6 (2.2.4) & DEB: locus of control.

Fear-based occupations are often the same as those based on hate: loan-sharking, for example, involves fear techniques to get the debtors to make their repayments. Full-time religious preachers who threaten others with teachings about sin, fear of God and his biases, and some terrible after-death punishments for unbelievers would be wrong livelihoods that are fear-based.

5.2.2.3 If we are determined enough, we can practise some kind of right livelihood in whatever occupation (that is not improper) that we are engaged in. For example, we may be holding a PR (public relations) job, and we make it a rule to be helpful to others in every way we can. Or, we may be working as a manager in an essential occupation such as bread-making. If we work diligently, showing others compassion and wisdom, to that extent it is right livelihood.

Another way of making our occupation wholesome is to ensure that it does not involve undue mental strain upon oneself or others. Those with stressful occupations often go for meditation courses, hoping to destress themselves. However, a more proactive effort would be to initiate changes in our work nature and culture so that we are free of undue stress.

When, despite all our best efforts, we still find our work stressful or unwholesome, or we are unable to prevent stress or unhappiness amongst those we work with or those under our charge, then it is best that we, as practising Buddhists, move on to a more conducive working environment or more wholesome occupations.

5.2.2.4 We have noted that people usually spend a greater part of their waking lives earning a living, just as they did in the Buddha's time. If we wholesomely enjoy our work in ways beyond its pecuniary benefits, then it is said to be a "good" livelihood. However, it is only a right livelihood if we take refuge in the 3 jewels³⁹⁸ and keep to the 5 precepts [1.2.1.5 (1)], and understand and accept our livelihood not merely as a means of support, but more so as a part of our personal development towards the path of awakening.

If our approach to work is merely that of earning a living, and we don't really enjoy the work in a wholesome way, then we are merely *occupied* with a means of earning a living. Since we do not really enjoy our work, it will also have a negative effect on us. In that case, we should spend *as little time as possible with it*. And we need to give up that job that is unwholesome work for a more wholesome one.

We must conclude then that we should at least be wholesomely happy with our work. In right livelihood, however, we are, as a rule, more than just being wholesomely happy with our work. Our work is our life and our life is our work. The two are inseparable on account of our commitment to the Dharma.

5.2.3 Vocation

5.2.3.1 Of these three terms—profession, occupation and vocation—the last, vocation is the best form of livelihood. It is, however, rare outside of right livelihood, of which it is a synonym: right livelihood is a *vocation*. Although today, **vocation** often has the sense of "one's ordinary occupation, business or profession" (OED), in the right livelihood context, we would see it as a "calling," from the original Latin noun, *vocatio*, "a calling," or verb, *vocāre*, "to call." Hence, it often refers to a means of livelihood directly related to what we consider to be of the ultimate importance in our life. However, this can mean different things to different people, especially if we are religious.

5.2.3.2 In Buddhist terms, our vocation is an "inner or higher call," that is, we are drawn to our job by a sense of "**spiritual urgency**" (*samvega*). It is a response to some kind of seeing into the true nature of life—that is, decay, disease and death—such as noticing how people drastically changed, or after recovering from some near-death experience, or having suffered the loss of a dearly beloved, or being confronted by the devastating sufferings of the deprived or the victims of religious violence (such as mass murders by suicide bombers).³⁹⁹

We may, for our vocation, turn to the teaching or medical profession, or even take up writing or some creative arts to express our feelings. If we are true to our vocation, we are inspired, filled with a joyful drive—the suttas call this *pāsāda*, a powerful sense of joyful faith.⁴⁰⁰ The adjective for it is

³⁹⁸ See **The one true refuge**, SD 3.1 esp (1.4.1.3).

³⁹⁹ SD 1.11 (3) & SD 9 (7.6).

⁴⁰⁰ On *pāsāda*, see SD 9 (7.8 esp 3). Cf *veda* ("joy") in *attha, veda dhamma, veda*, "joy in the goal, joy in the truth": (**Agata,phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10), SD 15.3 (4) & SD 10.16 (3.4.3.2).

pasanna, as in the phrase *pasanna,citta*, “a bright mind of faith,” “an inspired mind” or “a devoted heart.”⁴⁰¹

5.2.3.3 We may, for example, decide to be a nurse out of a desire to relieve human suffering, which directly connects us with Buddhism. Work in the arts or the various creative activities can also come into this category—if we pursue them in a creative spirit, without commercializing them. We see our vocation with “Dharma joy in its meaning and purpose” (*attha,veda dhamma,veda*) [5.2.3.2n].

When we practise right livelihood as our *vocation*, we see no difference between work and play. We enjoy our work so much that we are fired up with zest or joyful interest (*pīti*). We are so immersed in it that we do not mind spending all our waking moments with it. We are not just “doing” it (with the body or with speech) but we *are* it (our heart and mind are fully in it).

5.2.3.4 Right livelihood, then, is an ideal situation, one which does not always come to us by accident. We must be moved by a calling [5.2.3.1] or a “seeing,” a vision of true reality. We want to better things for others, or at least, we do not want to contribute to the suffering of others or the deterioration of the environment.

We can rarely turn to right livelihood on our own: we may not even know what it is, or that it is possible. However, with a heart of compassion and a mind for wisdom, when we are touched by the Dharma, we are simply inspired in this direction. However, young people who are naturally compassionate, or who know some Buddhism, and have yet to launch themselves into a career or are new to the professional life, may be inspired to answer such a calling. To shape and strengthen this vision, we need to know the Buddha’s teaching, especially that of right livelihood—which is the *whole* of the spiritual life [1.2.3.2].

5.2.4 Living the vision

5.2.4.1 A good time for us to start being familiar with right livelihood is when we are young and planning to take up a career, or even when we are new to a professional life and begin to notice it is not as great as we have thought. Then, we should consider working for just enough money to live on, and devoting the rest of our time to Buddhism: to “**study, live, know and teach the Dharma.**”⁴⁰²

5.2.4.2 The best way to work with right livelihood (RL) is with a **community** of RL practitioners [5.2.4.4]. If there is no such community within our reach, we can still work in the RL spirit in one of two ways. The first way is to have a regular part-time job or some kind of home-based business which gives us enough money to live on, so that we can freely devote our time to the Dharma.

The second way, slightly more difficult, is for us to work for a period of, say, six months and then take the rest of the year off, supporting ourself on our savings and devoting all that time to Buddhism. This is, of course, a flexible arrangement. If we can make sufficient money, we may even work for a shorter period of time, so that we can spend more time in Dharma life. A rule of thumb here is that the time we spend making money should not exceed the time we can fully live the Dharma life.

5.2.4.3 Right livelihood—as the whole of the spiritual life—is necessarily a simple life, at least in the sense that we can focus on what we see as meaningful and purposeful in our Dharma vision. This does, of course, mean cutting down on our wants—after all, we are lay workers living the spiritual life—so that we live within our means, as stated in **the Dīgha,jānu Sutta** [5.1.2.5].

Our needs are easily supported when we cut down our *wants*. In fact, it is surprising how much we can cut down if we are really determined to do so. As we deepen and widen our Dharma understanding (through sutta study, meditation and related activities), we are simply moved to live more simply: when we are truly happy, we have significantly fewer wants and celebrate our needs.

5.2.4.4 Living joyfully according to our needs not only saves us a lot of time, with which we can more fully live the Dharma, it is also instrumental in supporting **an RL spiritual community**, which runs on the surplus that we donate and dedicate to a common cause for living together, in space or in spirit. Working as a community or collective gives us many advantages and benefits, as with living like the early Buddhists did as the fourfold communities of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

⁴⁰¹ *Pasanna,citta* occurs at V 1:16; A 4:209; Sn 316, 403, 690; Pv 2.1.6; SnA 460; PvA 129.

⁴⁰² This is one of the mottos of the Dharmafarers, a community of lay Dharma workers in Malaysia and Singapore in the 1980s, led by Piyasilo (Piya Tan when he was still a monk). It actually was then stated as “study, practise, realize and spread the Dharma” and that “as we learn, we will teach; as we teach, we will learn.”

Firstly, we are able to pool our **funds, skills and resources** for the purposes of RL and Dharma work. Right livelihood is *how well* we work and live; Dharma work is how we inspire others, the world, to see the true meaning, purpose and benefits of the Buddha Dharma itself. The RL community is there to support those of us who are ready and able to work as full-time lay Dharma teachers and missionaries.

Secondly, we may nurture those who are ready and able to become renunciants as monks and nuns, to go for proper monastic training without being tainted by worldliness and careerism. In due course, with proper training, such monastics can set up, with our support, their own respective communities, which become our Dharma-hearted and sangha-spirited retreat centres to train other RL community members and anyone willing to learn and practise the Dharma.

Thirdly, the right livelihood way of life is the basis for a Dharma-inspired and viable Buddhist economics, which we will further discuss separately. [5.3]

5.3 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AS A SOCIAL ORGANISM

5.3.1 Right livelihood as economics

5.3.1.1 At the start of our discussion on right livelihood, we mentioned that early Buddhism addresses three aspects of human society: the social, the political and the economic. Here, we will address the third aspect, that is, the economic.⁴⁰³ Essentially, early Buddhism sees economics as the skillful and wholesome management of our home on three levels: the immediate family, the wider social context and the open spiritual community.

5.3.1.2 Right livelihood as **Buddhist economics**, naturally, should begin at home, with how we manage our **family** life on a simple human level. Every member of the family, especially a Buddhist family, has some kind of role to play. This has been well laid out especially in **the Sigā'ovāda Sutta** (D 31),⁴⁰⁴ where various reciprocal duties, by way of work, are listed as the following 6 kinds of relationships, that is, between parents and children (or between guardians and wards), secular teachers and pupils, husband and wife, between friends, employer and employees, and spiritual teachers and students.

5.3.1.3 These reciprocal social and work relationships are prescribed basically for the immediate family and the wider society. The parents/children and husband/wife pairs of reciprocal relationships constitute **intra-family dynamics**. This is the core of family life, upon which is built a network of the extended family, which is common in the Buddha's time. In our own times, however, it is more likely, if we are living in a highly urbanized society, to be limited to a nuclear family.⁴⁰⁵

Beyond the immediate family, relationships with friends tend to be closer than with most members of our family, even our extended family. This is likely to be the case when we consistently show familiarity and trust (*vissāsa*) with our friends, including neighbours.⁴⁰⁶ In an urbanized society, then, we need to work towards building warmth, fellowship and friendship with those living in our vicinity.

5.3.1.4 The first kinds of reciprocal relationships should be built beyond our immediate family and neighbourhood, that is, those between secular teachers and pupils, between employer and employees, and with our spiritual teachers (in the Buddhist case, this would, of course, be "with our Dharma teachers"). This is the basis of our communal relationships or **community**. For most of us, this is as far as our communal or social network will go.

5.3.1.5 To build up our relationships beyond the community, we need to get involved with some kind of socially interactive activity, such as social work, social groups, or running some kind of right livelihood business. In *social work*, we widen our social relationship to include others with similar interest or vision, such as working with the blind or with single parents. Social groups include various kind of clubs and interest groups, and we may also include extramural classes, such as those teaching languages, crafts and meditation.

⁴⁰³ Here we will discuss the wider application of right livelihood. For a fuller discussion on Buddhist economics, see SD 37.8 (1.2, 6).

⁴⁰⁴ D 31,27-34 (SD 4.1).

⁴⁰⁵ On the economic family, see SD 37.8 (6.2.2.1).

⁴⁰⁶ Cf "The trusted are the best of relatives" (*vissāsa*) (Dh 204).

5.3.1.6 One effective way of extending our social network is through running a business where we often interact with others. This may include a health food corner, or a provision store, or a health-oriented business teaching yoga or meditation. Such enterprises in themselves do not automatically create friendships. So, we need to be wholesomely communicative with our clients and contacts. A few effective ways of extending our hand of friendship is to keep in touch with others through some kind of mailing list,⁴⁰⁷ or offering special free classes or gatherings for them. The idea is to keep in happy contact with one another, extending our dynamic network of Dharma-inspired people.

5.3.1.7 Such endeavours, however, are the application of Dharma teachings in the world. Properly and consistently practised, such principles will nurture and foster a good community, and when applied on a wider scale may create a good society. However, as the open society is always open to new challenges. Most people are somehow, sooner or later, swayed by the 8 winds of the worldly conditions—gain and loss, fame and obscurity, blame and praise, joy and pain.⁴⁰⁸ Even such a good society will not last forever. Only when there is a political will amongst our leaders can we work towards such ideals, and to convince our society members that such ideals are worthwhile to be realized.

Even then, this good society will have its ups and downs, and will have great difficulty to satisfy, much less, uplift the *individual*. To do that, we need something smaller but more effective—the spiritual community.

5.3.2 Spiritual community

5.3.2.1 One of the greatest benefits of right livelihood is that it can be the basis for the creation and success of a **spiritual community**. We may even say that the spiritual community is an expression, a celebration, of right livelihood. It is a fellowship of individuals who have a common love for the Dharma, so that they are inspired to live the good life of right speech and right action as the basis for mental cultivation, with the vision and aspiration to attain awakening in this life itself.

5.3.2.2 In the simplest of terms, the spiritual community is inspired and guided by a vision of **truth and beauty**.⁴⁰⁹ Truth here refers to the Dharma as the best of possible ideas that we can possibly think of: it helps us clearly understand the true nature and meaning of life, as embodied in the first two noble truths.⁴¹⁰ We are born as the most fragile of beings, needing the longest period of protection, nurturing and humanizing. Yet, we are capable of growing into the wisest of all beings—for, a buddha can only arise amongst humans.

Beauty is the Dharma that gives us true purpose in life. Having understood the meaning of life as embodied in the first two noble truths, we diligently walk the path of personal cultivation of mind and heart. *Moral virtue* clears our mind of all that hinders its calm and clarity, so that it feels the true beauty of the higher mind. This is a joyful beauty that strengthens and prepares the mind to be able to look directly into true reality and see it for what it is, and so win mental liberation.⁴¹¹

Truth is the Dharma that is the goal of the spiritual life, the full understanding into the true nature of the *ending* of suffering. While beauty frees us from the world of the senses, truth frees us from that which limits the mind. Seeing the truth of impermanence, we enter the stream that flows into nirvana: we are *streamwinners*. Fully understanding how impermanence entails unsatisfactoriness and suffering opens us to the realization that there can be neither eternal essence of anything nor any abiding entity: when we realize this truth of non-self, we become *arhats*.

5.3.2.3 The spiritual community is an ideal society—even if it is on a small scale—in the sense that it brings together the best conditions for spiritual awakening. Even before we awaken, a glimpse of truth of awakening inspires us with the drive and genius to create beauty with the talents that we have. **Beauty** here is an expression of this liberating truth through the creative media of our senses—such as through writing, the visual arts, music, drama and wholesome meatless cuisine. By our own

⁴⁰⁷ The Minding Centre, since 2007, has been sending out weekly reflections by Piya Tan through email to keep in touch with Buddhists globally.

⁴⁰⁸ **Loka, dhamma S 1+2** (A 8.5+6), SD 42.2+3.

⁴⁰⁹ On truth and beauty, see SD 40a.1 (8.1.2); in terms of right livelihood, SD 37.8 (2.3).

⁴¹⁰ On the 4 noble truths as models for understanding *the meaning and purpose of life*, see SD 1.1 (4.0.1).

⁴¹¹ “Mental liberation” refers both to the freeing of the mind from the 5 mental hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor, and doubt) to attain dhyana and, in due course, to the freedom that is awakening itself.

lives, we inspire others—like Assaji inspires Sāriputta⁴¹²—to the spiritual life, even to renounce the world for the holy life.

5.3.2.4 The spiritual community provides a full life *outside* of the world itself: it is a still centre, the eye in the world’s raging storm. Another way of saying this is that the spiritual community is *in* the world and *for* the world, but not *of* the world. It is not an organization; so, we cannot become a member simply by joining.

It is only our commitment to the 3 jewels [5.2.2.4] and our growing comprehension of the Dharma that effectively integrate us into the spiritual community. This community comprises individuals who are ethically, emotionally and spiritually in true contact and communication with one another. We can have a good idea of the individuals who form this community from **the Dhamma, cetiya Sutta** (M 89), as those “living in concord, with mutual joy, without disputing, mixing like milk and water, seeing each other with kindly eyes.”⁴¹³

Unlike cults, the spiritual community is not governed or led by any single leader, not matter how charismatic (especially if he is charismatic). However, there is usually a seniormost member, wise and experienced, in the community that we respect and seek advice when necessary. At best, he is a sort of “first amongst equals.” On the whole, however, the spiritual community runs on the Dharma, governed and inspired by it—“the worthy ones do not deal with us; the Dharma deals with us”—as clearly stated in **the Go, paka Moggallāna Sutta** (M 108).⁴¹⁴ [5.3.3.2]

5.3.3 Right livelihood and the ideal society

5.3.3.1 “Community” or communion (*samvāsa*) arises from our consistent habit of coming together to listen to one another with lovingkindness, working to sort out a problem or project with compassion, studying the suttas or Dharma with gladness, or meditating in equanimity. The more this happens, the stronger is our community.

The word *samvāsa* (*sam*, “together” + *vāsa*, the verbal noun of *vasati*, “to live”) means “living together,” in both space and spirit. In fact, it is a key Vinaya term, meaning “to be in communion,”⁴¹⁵ but has a broad sense, best conveyed in English as “community” (both in space and spirit).⁴¹⁶ This is the spirit which holds a spiritual community together in one place, or connects us with one another no matter where we are. Such a spirit further deepens our Dharma life and widens our Dharma sharing, especially when we periodically gather in communion or *uposatha*,⁴¹⁷ as the early monastics gather every full moon, new moon day, the quarters and the special days.

5.3.3.2 The spiritual community does not centre upon a teacher or leader, although there may be a wise and compassionate elder whom we deeply respect and often consult in the Dharma. The spiritual community centres upon the Dharma, as clearly described by Ānanda in **the Go, paka Moggallāna Sutta** (M 108), thus:

There is, brahmin, the course of training for the monks prescribed, the Pātimokkha [monastic code] laid down by the Blessed One who knows and sees, the arhat, the fully self-awakened one.

On an uposatha [observance] day, those of us who live in dependence on the one and same village and resort, all assemble as one. Having assembled, we ask of one another regarding what has happened.

If any of the monks were to say that he has committed an offence or a transgression, we will deal with him in accordance with the training-rule [the Dharma], in accordance with the way we have been instructed.

The worthy ones do not deal with us; the Dharma deals with us.” (M 108,11), SD 33.5

⁴¹² SD 42.8 (1.2).

⁴¹³ **Dhamma, cetiya S** (M 89,11), SD 64.10; also at (**Anuruddha**) **Upakkilesa S** (M 128,11 @ SD 5.19).

⁴¹⁴ M 108/3:7-15 (SD 33.5).

⁴¹⁵ V 1:97, 2:237, 3:28.

⁴¹⁶ A 2:57 f, 187, 3:164 f, 4:172; J 1:2, 35, 4:317; Sn 283, 290, 335; Dh 207, 302.

⁴¹⁷ *Upasatha* comes from *upa* (“up close”) + *vasatha*, the n for *vasati* (“to live, reside”), as in the etymology of *samvāsa* above. Hence, *uposatha* lit means “a close gathering” of like-hearted individuals. See SD 4.18 (1).

The lay spiritual community, too, should not centre upon a personality, but on the Dharma—like a truly democratic city-state with its constitution. Such a community has no place for a guru, and will or must never be a cult. The spiritual community is a **sangha spirit** that can be experienced by all Dharma-spirited practitioners. While the sangha comprises celibate renunciants, the lay community is the rich field for cultivating Dharma-spirited individuals committed to the ideals of moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom, and the aspiration of attaining awakening in this life itself, at least as stream-winners.⁴¹⁸

5.3.3.3 The lay spiritual community is, as it were, *the middle of the mundane middle way*, straddled between the world and the monastic community. This distinction between the lay spiritual community and the monastic sangha is clear. The lay spiritual community comprises lay practitioners who may or may not be celibate, but they are engaged with the world through right livelihood, which we can see as Buddhist economics [5.3.1]. Furthermore, lay spiritual community members are fully committed to living life in aspiration for awakening in this life itself at least as streamwinners or as once-returners.

5.3.3.4 The monastic sangha, on the other hand, comprises celibate renunciants who have nothing to do with the world. They merely “engage” with it through being spiritual exemplars and teaching the Dharma. They are in turn supported with alms, not in exchange for services rendered, but rather out of faith in its goodness.⁴¹⁹ Members of the monastic sangha are fully committed to deep meditation and the contemplative life that brings about awakening in this life itself as non-returners or as arhats.

For this reason, the monastic right livelihood belongs to the “higher moral training” (*adhisīla-sikkhā*) [1.5.1]: it prepares the renunciant for the supramundane path. Although the path of the lay spiritual community is not technically said to be “supramundane,” it is still possible for the practitioner to attain sainthood, at least streamwinning and once-returning. The reason that the monastic path is called “higher” (*adhi-*) or supramundane (*lok’uttara*) is clear enough: it is a renunciant’s path, one that has completely let go of the world to walk the path of awakening in this life itself.

5.3.3.5 From all this, we can see that the lay spiritual community, like the monastic sangha, is not an organization. Hence, we cannot become a “member” (which actually means a living limb of a greater whole) of such a community. The lay community is neither a construction of organized annual rituals and activities, nor a hierarchy of authorized or certified “enlightened” masters or lineages. It is an **organism** in the sense that we must *live* it: we need to practise the Dharm—*not* to change or modernize it—but to change ourself to become true individuals.

5.4 THE MONASTIC LIVELIHOOD

5.4.1 Wrong livelihood for monastics

5.4.1.1 The “right livelihood” for monastics is always in *the singular* because, unlike the laity, they are never economically engaged in any way—they should not—and that their whole monastic life is a livelihood of renunciation. In short, a monastic is avowedly never gainfully employed: a gainfully employed renunciant, a career monk, is a contradiction in terms. Although a monastic may not be gainfully employed, he is nevertheless *truly and profitably* engaged in work—that is, the 3 trainings [1.5; 5.4.2.2]—whose profit (*attha*) is awakening in this life itself.

5.4.1.2 Now, we will ask ourself the question: What is the significance of the monastic life? Or, what is the meaning and purpose of renunciation? Historically, we can say that Buddhism began with monastics—the awakening of the group of 5 monks in the deer park at Isipatana⁴²⁰—and before them, the Buddha, too, is a renunciant.

5.4.1.3 By the meaning of monastic life as renunciation is meant what it should communicate to us: how are we educated by it? The answer is obvious: the monastic life should convey to us the truth of suffering in the world, and it is *craving* that is at the root of suffering—these are the first two

⁴¹⁸ See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

⁴¹⁹ On wholesome giving and support “out of faith,” see SD 37.8 (1.5.2).

⁴²⁰ See **Dhammacakka Pavattana S** (S 56.11) + SD 1.1 (1) and **Pañcavaggiya Pabbajjā** (Mv 1.6.32-37), SD 1.1(9).

noble truths. In other words, there is a way out of suffering, that is, by renouncing the world and joining the monastic community for those who are able to do so.

5.4.1.4 By the **purpose of renunciation** is meant the actual process of getting out of the world of suffering, that is, walking the path and attaining nirvana—this is encompassed by the last two noble truths.⁴²¹ We walk the path of awakening heading for nirvana, the end of all suffering.

Even if the renunciant on the path does not attain nirvana in this life, his livelihood will free him from the world, so that within seven lives at the most, or even shorter, he will be able to attain nirvana—that is, if he⁴²² diligently and honestly keeps to his livelihood, mental training and wisdom training. Here, "livelihood" refers to the *whole of his moral life* [1.1.2.1], which is, in turn, the basis for the holy life. [1.2.3.2]

5.4.1.5 **Wrong livelihood** (*micchā,ājīva*) is any kind of social or economic activity, especially a habitual conduct, that distracts a renunciant from his spiritual state and goal. Since a renunciant, by definition, renounces the world—meaning both a social life and indulging in sensual pleasures—he is also "not for hire,"⁴²³ as he has also renounced any economic dealing, with money or in any other form.⁴²⁴

5.4.1.6 Giving **money** to monastics is not only morally wrong (they break their precepts when they accept it, even by way of silent approval),⁴²⁵ and the giver, too, creates bad karma in making the monastic break the rule. Any gifts made to monastics should be both allowable (*kappiya*) and timely (*kālīka*). Donations of money can only be made to a licitor (*kappiya,kāraka*), a lay attendant who receives and keeps a monastic's donations for specific and allowable purposes (such as buying robes or medical care when needed).⁴²⁶

5.4.1.7 Since a renunciant is not for hire [5.4.1.5], he would not be gainfully employed in any way, and careerism is certainly not in his "job description." Gainfully employment includes any kind of indulgence in the "animal arts"—such as fortune-telling, geomancy and magical rituals⁴²⁷—which in themselves are also distractions from the holy life. Indulgence in such animal arts implies that the renunciant involved is caught up not only with the lust for gains, but also with wrong views.

5.4.1.8 Wrong livelihoods, whether for renunciants or for the laity—insofar as they embody **natural morality**⁴²⁸—have serious karmic consequences because they are all rooted in some kind of unwholesome roots (greed, hate or delusion). **The Bāla Paṇḍita Sutta** (M 129) (the discourse on the wise and the foolish) says that those who make a living from religious rituals, like the sacrificial brahmins or the commercialized priests of our own times, would be reborn as dirt-feeding animals (like chickens, pigs and dogs).⁴²⁹

⁴²¹ The sequence of these last two truths is 4-3, that is, the path followed by the ending of suffering, ie, nirvana. This is the "practice sequence" of the 4 truths: see **Mahā Saḷ-āyatanika S** (M 149,11 etc) + SD 41.9 (2.4).

⁴²² As a rule, "he" serves as a universal pronoun for both sexes. It helps to mentally see "he," as a rule, referring to both or either sex, and "she" (and their related forms) only to the female sex.

⁴²³ See **Kasī Bhara,dvāja S** (Sn 7.8), SD 69.6 & SD 37.8 (1.4.3 + 1.5).

⁴²⁴ See **Money and monastics**, SD 4.19-23.

⁴²⁵ The rule against monks accepting "gold and silver" (*jātarūpa,rajata*) is Nissaggiya 18 (V 3:236-239). For other rules and sanctions, see SD 4.19 (2.2).

⁴²⁶ See SD 4.19 (7.3).

⁴²⁷ Every one of the first 13 suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya contains a stock list of the "animal arts," called the "moralities" (*sīla*): see, eg, **Sāmaññaphala S** (D 2,43-62/1:65-69) & SD 8.10 (3). See also SD 37.8 (1.4.2).

⁴²⁸ In contrast to "prescribed or conventional morality" (*paññāti* or *paññati sīla*), there is "natural morality" (*pakati sīla*), that of the 5 precepts, the karmic effect of which applies to all alike, whether lay or monastic, Buddhist or not. Natural morality is based both on intention (*cetanā*) and natural values, such as those of life, happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom. The intentional deprivation of such values is invariably regarded as *naturally* immoral, but their negativity varies according to the gravity of the unwholesomeness of the intention behind the act. See SD 30.8 (8.4.2.2); SD 37.8 (2); SD 40a.1 (13.2).

⁴²⁹ **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129,18-19/3:167 f), SD 2.22. This is called coprophagy, "the consumption of faeces." Animals such as rabbits and hamsters do this because their alimentary system does not fully digest their food, so they need to ingest the partly digested food in their droppings, from which they obtain some nutrients. Young elephants, hippos, pandas and koalas eat the faeces of their parents or other animals to obtain the bacteria necessary to digest the vegetation they feed on. See further: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coprophagia>.

Those who simply live cyclic lives of merely looking for food and fun, with predictable emotions, and a lack of the desire for learning, are virtual animals (who are born, feed, play, reproduce and die). They live in the dark, or in water or in filth. They eat each other and prey on the weak. Because of the lack of spiritual life, not doing what is wholesome, in such states, it is very difficult for animals to gain the human state (Dh 182).⁴³⁰

5.4.2 Right livelihoods for monastics

5.4.2.1 A renunciant who is diligent in his monastic life is described as “one who is accomplished in the training along with the livelihood of monks” (*bhikkhūnam sikkhā sājīva, samāpanno*).⁴³¹ Here, “the training” (*sikkhā*) clearly refers broadly to the 3 trainings [1.5-1.6], but more specifically to the monastic precepts, while “the livelihood” (*ājīva*) to the monastic’s conduct, not specified in the rules.

5.4.2.2 The Vinaya Commentary, commenting on the phrase, explains *sikkhā* as meaning “the 3 trainings” (*ti sikkhā*), that is, the training in higher morality (*adhisīla, sikkhā*), the training in the higher mind (*adhicitta, sikkhā*) and the training in higher wisdom (*adhipaññā, sikkhā*). In the above context, the first training is meant. The phrase *sājīva* is the name given to the training-rules (*sikkhāpada*) laid down by the Blessed One. A monastic who has trained in this is said to be “accomplished in the training” (*sājīva, samāpanna*)⁴³² (VA 3:24).

In these two categories of monastic rules, the former, the 3 trainings, refers to those of the eightfold path, which leads to awakening: hence, they are the embodiment of natural morality (*pakati, sīla*) [5.4.1.7]. It is their nature to liberate. The other rules, which govern daily conduct, such as personal etiquette, are those introduced by the Buddha himself; hence, they are said to be “prescribed morality” (*paññatti, sīla* or *pañṇatti, sīla*).

5.4.2.3 The Vinaya technical term for the “training” based on natural morality is *ādi, brahma-cariyikā sikkhā*, “the training that is fundamental (or beginning) of the holy life” [1.6.3.1]. The technical term for the other training, based on prescribed morality, is *abhi, samācārikā sikkhā*, “the training related to proper conduct,” which is directly related to the monastic right livelihood.

5.4.2.4 By the 5th century CE, Buddhaghosa had given us the following technical categorization of monastic rules and training, comprising the 4 full purifications by way of moral virtue (*catu, pārisuddhi sīla*), that is:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) restraint with regard to the monastic code, | <i>pātimokkha, saṃvara sīla</i> |
| (2) sense-restraint, | <i>indriya, saṃvara, sīla</i> |
| (3) full purification of livelihood, and | <i>ājīva, pārisuddhi sīla</i> |
| (4) moral virtue with regard to the 4 requisites, | <i>paccaya, sannissita sīla</i> (Vism 1.25) ⁴³³ |

5.4.2.5 The first, “the restraint with regard to the monastic code” is conventional morality (*sammuti sīla*) because it has been *prescribed* by the Buddha in the spirit of the sangha. By “prescribed” is meant that these rules should be applied to every living member of the sangha, and that any offence that occur must be settled in the prescribed way, usually with the arbitration of the sangha.

Although these rules are prescriptive in nature (they define what is wrong conduct), they are not always “conventional” by nature. The first 4 “defeat” (*pārājika*) rules and any of the rules that are rooted in some negative *intention* are based on “natural” morality, and thus karmically potent. The idea of prescribed morality is a sort of reminder, reinforced by the sangha, for the offender to help him free

⁴³⁰ See SD 38.4 (4.4.2), SD 37.8 (1.6.3) & also Reflection, **Becoming human: it’s easier than you think** (R95) or in Piya Tan, *Revisioning Buddhism*, 2011: ch 2.

⁴³¹ This line ends the “short (M) renunciation pericope,” see, eg, **Cūḷa Hatthi, padopama S** (M 27,11-13/-1:179), SD 40a.5; **Mahā Taṇhā, saṅkhaya S** (M 38,30-33), SD 7.10; **Kandaraka S** (M 51,12-14), SD 32.9; **Ghoṭa, mukha S** (M 94,15-17); **Deva, dāha S** (M 101,35-37), SD 18.4; **Cha-b, bisodhana S** (M 112,18-20), SD 59.7; and also ends the “full (A) renunciation pericope,” see, eg, (**Catukka**) **Attan Tapa S** (A 4.198/2:208 f), SD 56.7; (**Durabhisambhava**) **Upāli S** (A 10.99/5:204 f), SD 30.9; (**Puggala**) **Attan Tapa S** (Pug 4.24/56 f). .

⁴³² *Sikkhā’ti tisso sikkhā: adhisīla, sikkhā, adhicitta, sikkhā, adhipaññā, sikkhā. Tatra yāyam adhisīla, sikkhā, ayam imasmim atthe adhippetā sikkhā’ti. Sājīvaṃ nāma yaṃ bhagavatā paññattam sikkhāpadam, etam sājīvaṃ nāma. Tasmim sikkhati, tena vuccati sājīva, samāpanno’ti.* (VA 3:24)

⁴³³ Vism 1.25/11, elaborated in Vism 1.26-135/11-47, See SD 48.9 (2.2).

himself from his unwholesome fault or habit so that he is strengthened to overcome and refrain from those offences in the future.

5.4.2.6 The other three kinds of morality are rooted in **natural morality** [5.4.1.7]. It is up to the monastic to apply the morality of sense-restraint effectively to stop old defilements and prevent new ones from arising. The “full purification of livelihood” are those spiritual conditions for the cultivation of unarisen good and the further cultivation of the arisen good. The “moral virtue with regard to the 4 requisites” reminds the monastic to practise simplicity and economy in terms of his life supports (alms-food, robes, shelter and health supports), and that whatever he uses of these have only one purpose: to help him along the path of awakening, and to expedite the attaining of liberation and nirvana.⁴³⁴

5.5 VIOLENCE AND WAR—THE POSSIBLE WAY OUT

5.5.1 New realities

5.5.1.1 Here, we return to our discussion on the broader significance and applications of right livelihood to our global community. Our world today is vastly different from that of the Buddha. The Buddha, in his great wisdom, framed the principles of Buddhist ethics in such a way so that we are able to work with our new realities without having to change the Dharma or the sangha in any way. The Dharma is the gold standard of truth, and the conventional sangha provides the living opportunity for us who are willing and able to fully dedicate ourselves to attain the highest in this life itself.

The laity, too, can attain the first stages of awakening in this life itself by keeping to the 5 precepts and being mindful of impermanence. The 5 precepts are based on **natural morality** (*pakati, sīla*), reflected in the 5 values (*dhamma*) of *life, happiness, freedom, truth and wisdom*. Natural morality is something found in the best teachings of all religions and philosophies, and in human goodness, that is, humanity itself. Natural morality is not only about humans, but about *all* life, which includes animals and our environment, too. [5.4.1.7]

5.5.1.2 It is important to understand natural morality as being inclusive of all life, simply because we live in an interconnected world and universe. The existence of animals is part of our own existence—simply put: just imagine our world without any animals in it.

Animals suffer much more today than in the past, even 2500 years ago. In the Buddha’s time, they generally roamed more freely and were better treated. Today, with modern farming, factories and technology, commercial animals and fowl are kept in closed, often crowded, environments, cruelly treated and engineered even before they are systematically slaughtered for the growing market, local and overseas. We simply cannot bear to know the pain that attends their lives and death, and this works in the favour of the growth of this industry.

5.5.1.3 The Buddha is keenly aware of the environment and respects it well enough to introduce various “training” (*sekhiya*) rules so that monastics do not pollute the environment or destroy plant life.⁴³⁵ Today, we have only become more interested in the environment as the world climate begins to wreak havoc, and the weather becomes more extreme. Global warming has caused the global temperature to slowly but surely rise, melting the polar ice-caps and raising the sea-level, which then swallows whole island-nations and eats away at our very shorelines.

One of the major contributors to global warming and environmental destruction is none other than our meat consumption, and its growing market. Since meat is higher on the food chain compared to plants, more resources are required to produce the nutrition in meat. This was not an issue before, as food animals typically consumed what humans do not, such as grass. Most food animals today are fed grains and other resource-intensive products.

As the Buddhist population grows globally—and if we continue to consume meat and animal products—it means that we are contributing to the consumption of more energy, water, space and other resources. Besides being a burden on the environment, this creates a range of related problems owing

⁴³⁴ For more details on “Right livelihood for renunciants,” see SD 37.8 (1.4, 4).

⁴³⁵ Pāc 20/V 4:48 f (MA 1:94). On the instruction, “I shall dispose of it where there are no plants or drop it into water where there is no life,” see V 1:157, 2:216; M 1:207, 3:157; S 1:169; Sn p15. Pāc 20 and 62 make it an offence for monks knowingly to make use of water that contains life (V 4:48 f, 125). The Pātimokkha training-rules (*sekhiya*) prohibits monks, if they are not ill, from urinating or spitting on plants.

to the use of fertilisers, the disposal of huge amounts of animal waste and so on. The meat that we eat is slowly destroying our world and killing us—unless we at once do something positive about it.

5.5.2 The new violence

5.5.2.1 Another new reality we must face, one that is different from the Buddha's time, is that of organized violence, and systematic and massive killing, especially in armed conflicts. The Buddha warns us that **soldiering** is wrong livelihood. In his time, soldiers have only one purpose—to guard the powerful and kill their enemies. We need to understand the kind of environment in which the Buddha gives this particular teaching.

The Buddha's reasons on how soldiering can be wrong livelihood is found in **the Yodh'ājīva Sutta** (S 42.3) and **the Ass'āroha Sutta** (S 42.5)—these Suttas have been discussed in the essay on right livelihood (SD 37.8).⁴³⁶ Here, we will only briefly make some additional comments in connection with that discussion.

5.5.2.2 Basically, soldiering is wrong livelihood insofar as it is rooted in any of the unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion, or wrong view, ill will and violence. In other words, it is only *wrong* when it embodies the unwholesome roots (*akusala mūla*) or wrong action (*micchā kammantā*), or arouse any of them in others. In this sense, it is not accurate to say that “we are our profession”: it is more correct to say that we are what we do. We are wrong when we kill; we are right when we protect our loved ones, our community, our country, against aggressors. This distinction is helpful in applying our understanding of right livelihood to our own times.

5.5.2.3 In today's belligerent engagements, with more sophisticated weapons, the victims tend to die or suffer in greater numbers, and in a greater variety of ways, but the pain and the sufferings of those who mourn their losses are not different from those of the pre-modern battles. Battles have almost always been the devastating luxuries of a few powerful people, or even a single person, who is able to blind or bind others together into justifying the mass destruction of the perceived enemy or problem.

It is vitally helpful to make historical *and* psychological studies of such leaders and their followers who engineer such battles, so that we can educate our children, hence, the future, to work in more peaceful and productive ways. The idea of a European Union, for example, difficult as it is even now, is apparently the best arrangement there is to prevent any new great war or world war from that continent.

5.5.2.4 However, today's battles are less defined but more protracted (such as the Arab-Israeli conflicts that started in 1948 and are still going on to this day). The victims are not merely soldiers, neither are the combatants, fighters or killers, either. There are the suicidal mass bombers, some of whom are very young people, too. Many civilians, especially children, are involved; even young children learn to use weapons and to kill, and many, then, die even before they reach majority.

5.5.3 The principle of greater good

5.5.3.1 There are famous living teachers who tell us, some in serious tone, some in poetic form, to see ourselves as not being different from those who oppress us, even kill others, including our loved ones and our fellowmen. The sentiment of lovingkindness is, of course, noble. Such teachings even make their teachers famous and revered as being wise and saintly.⁴³⁷

We certainly would be able to believe that even the worst amongst us—who have done the most vile or violent acts against our own kind—can change or still have some goodness in them. But it is humanly difficult, even impossible, for us to condone, much less acquiesce, to such acts, even in poetic form, without addressing the true realities of the situation. The point is that, even if the pious teacher claims he would sacrifice his own life in a genocide and die for the religion, it is unlikely that any of

⁴³⁶ Acting and soldiering as wrong livelihoods have been discussed in the respective contexts of **Yodh'ājīva S** (S 42.3), SD 23.3, and **Ass'āroha S** (S 42.5), SD 69.16, which is best read first before reading this section.

⁴³⁷ We should be moderated by the Buddha's gentle reminder in (**Ahita**) **Thera S** (A 5.88) that even elderly, famous, wealthy, well learned monastics or teachers may be “of wrong view and perverted vision” (*micchā, dīṭṭhiko hoti viparīta, dassano*) (SD 40a.16).

his pupils or admirers would, like lemmings, allow themselves to be killed or violated in a genocide or by an enemy soldier. Indeed, we have no record of this ever happening in Buddhist history.⁴³⁸

5.5.3.2 We do have an interesting, even inspiring, case of the monk **Puṇṇa of Sunāparanta** who, on being questioned by the Buddha, declares that he is willing to face any violence from others, even die for the religion, if it comes to that. However, this is a special case of a saint who, in due course, becomes an arhat.⁴³⁹

This is perhaps the only sutta teaching that comes close to addressing martyrdom in early Buddhism, although we do have records of the Bodhisattva not fearing the threats of Māra, even when his life seems at risk, as reported in **the Padhāna Sutta** (Sn 3.2): “Better is death in battle for me than that I should live subjugated!”⁴⁴⁰ The context here is clearly that of a spiritual struggle, not a political quest.

It is difficult for many of us to say that we will die for the Dharma if we were to be tested and ravaged such as in Vietnam under the Catholic oppression of Ngo Dinh Diem in the early 1960s. As this is more of an exception than the rule, it is best left to the actual situation if it does occur. We may celebrate poetic licence in waxing lyrical about non-violence and self-sacrifice, but we must not be poetically licentious to confuse truth with *sincerity*.

Even truth can be challenged or bent, but *sincerity* cannot. Sincerity, as we well know of the Buddha, is saying what we mean and meaning what we say. And, of course, it is the Buddha who says it of himself—and we should rightly remember this attribution and not misrepresent him.⁴⁴¹ Even the most famous teachers may be wrong sometimes; but the suttas are always right in Dharma matters.

5.5.4 When Buddhism is at fault

5.5.4.1 The Buddha himself has never encouraged violence, much less wars—except in a figurative sense, against bad and evil.⁴⁴² On the other hand, he has stopped an impending battle, that is the conflict between the Sakyas and the Koliyas over the waters of the river Rohinī,⁴⁴³ where he famously asks the two opposing parties: “What is water worth?” “Very little, bhante.” “What are kshatriyas worth?” “Beyond price, bhante.”⁴⁴⁴

5.5.4.2 Like any other great faiths, the followers of Buddhism, too, have not always lived up to its principles. History records numerous examples of Buddhists engaging in violence and torture, even war and injustice.

⁴³⁸ For accounts of misuse of skillful means by way of the justifying of killing, see SD 30.8 (8.3.1).

⁴³⁹ M 145,5-6 (SD 20.15).

⁴⁴⁰ *Jīvitam saṅgāme me mataṃ seyyo yañ ce jīve parājito* (Sn 440).

⁴⁴¹ “Just as the Tathagata speaks, bhikkhus, so he acts; just as he acts, so he speaks. Thus, as one who acts as he speaks, who speaks as he acts, he is therefore called **Tathāgata**.” (*Yathā,vādī bhikkhave tathāgato tathā,kārī yathā,kārī tathā,vādī, iti yathā,vādī tathā,kārī yathā,kārī tathā,vādī, tasmā tathāgato ti vuccati*): **Mahā Govinda S** (D 19,11/2:224,3, 26/2:229,25), SD 63.4; **Pāsādika S** (D 29,29.3/3:135), SD 40a.6; (**Tathāgata**) **Loka S** (A 4.23,2/2:24,7) = (It 112/4.13/122,2), SD 15.7(2); **Nigrodha,kappa S** (only first phrase, Sn 24/357a*/62), SD 80.6 = J 326/104*; Nc:Be 169.

⁴⁴² On the Buddha’s skillful use of terms to present his teachings, see (**Licchavi**) **Sīha S** (A 8.12), SD 71.5. In the Saṃyutta, the Buddha encourages us to “kill” anger (S 1.71 = 2.3 = 7.1 = 11.21). For a wordplay on “slay” (“Having slain father and mother and the two warrior kings, and having destroyed the country and its revenue officer ...”) (Dh 294 f): see SD 36.1 (5.4.2).

⁴⁴³ DA 2:672-675; SA 1:68-71; SnA 1:357-359; DhA 3:254 f (ad Dh 198 f; DhA 3:254,6-255,19 = J 5:412,15-413,10; DhA 3:256,1-9 = J 5:414,4-11); **J 5:412-416** (ad J 536) [tr J:F 5:219-223] (most detailed), 4:207. The Rohinī is a small river dividing the Sākya and Koliya countries. A dam constructed across it provides water for both to cultivate their fields. Once, in the month of Jetṭha,mūla [May-June], a drought threatens to cause a violent conflict between the two peoples over depleted river waters. Knowing that a battle is imminent, the Buddha appears mid-air above the river between the opposing forces, and convinces them of the folly of conflict for the sake of a little water. On this occasion, the Buddha teaches the **Atta,daṇḍa S** (Sn 4.15), **Phandana J** (J 475), **Laṭukika J** (J 357) and **Vaṭṭaka Js** (J 35, 118, 394). Out of gratitude, the Sākya and the Koliyas each gives 250 young men to be ordained: AA 1:313, SnA 1:358; cf J 5:412, DhA 3:254. The accounts differ in details; J, which is the longest, mentions **Daddabha J** (J 322) and **Rukkha,dhamma J** (J 74). Both DA 2:672 f and SA 1:70 give **Paṭhavī,undriyana** [Se ~udriyana] **J** (untraced) instead of **Daddabha J**. The Rohinī is believed to have been a stream which joins the Rapti at Gorakhpur, now called the Rowai or Rohwaini. See A Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India*, 12 1971:190 ff.

⁴⁴⁴ Abridged: DA 2:674; SA 1:69; DhA 3:256; J 5:414.

- In the 14th-century China, Buddhist fighters led by temple rebel 朱元璋 Zhū Yuánzhāng, toppled the Mongol Yuan dynasty, and became the first Ming emperor, who went on to ban all Vinaya ceremonies (including monastic ordination).⁴⁴⁵
- The lamas of Tibet before Chinese rule, imposed forced labour, imprisoning offenders (especially serfs), even torturing them.⁴⁴⁶
- In Heian Japan (784-1185), wealthy and powerful temples employed Buddhist samurai monks, called *sōhei* 僧兵,⁴⁴⁷ as protectors, who were widely feared, even by the Mikado (emperor).

5.5.4.3 In the twentieth century, the Zen clergy of Japan fully supported Japanese militarism, aggression and imperialism in the Second World War. **Sawaki Kōdō** (沢木 興道, 1880-1965), a Japanese Sōtō Zen patriarch writes:

It is just to punish those who disturb the public order. Whether one kills or does not kill, the precept forbidding killing [is preserved]. It is the precept forbidding killing that wields the sword. It is the precept that throws the bomb. (1942)⁴⁴⁸

Kōdō, amongst other Zen teachers, advocated that if the killing is done without thinking, in a state of no-mind or no-self, then, the act is an expression of Zen enlightenment! This is the koan of an action where the victims are irrelevant as there is no karma.⁴⁴⁹

5.5.4.4 Here, briefly, are some probable reasons and conditions that brought about such anomalies in mainstream Buddhism in Japan. Buddhism in Japan goes back to the mid-6th century, when it was introduced from Korea. By the Heian period, Buddhist priests and monasteries wielded great influence, even the control, over most of Japanese affairs, including their politics. The native Shinto religion and priests were sidelined and had to adopt certain Buddhist practices. From the 16th to the 19th centuries, Japan was threatened by Christianity and western domination. The Japanese leaders, by then, had well known the dangers that religion and foreigners could pose to the state or at least against them.

The Meiji reformation successfully dismantled the feudal system, and ushered in national modernization. Imperial rule was restored in 1868, the year when the government decreed the “Separation of Gods and Buddhas.” Shintoism was purged of all Buddhist domination. In 1872, *nikujiki saitai* 肉食妻帯 (“meat-eating and marriage”) were officially decriminalized: this means that legally, the Buddhist clergy had to “eat meat and marry,” effectively laicizing them [compare the 1st Ming emperor’s similar efforts, 5.5.4.2]. In 1889, the emperor was declared to be a *kami* (Jap, “deity”), descended from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu herself. The Shinoists and their sympathisers launched the *haibutsu-kishaku* (Exterminate the Buddhas, destroy Shakyamuni) movement.⁴⁵⁰

With this kind of profoundly hostile environment in a nation that was heading for a world war, we can imagine the emotions that must have overwhelmed Japanese Buddhists. The drive for survival simply pushed Buddhist thinkers and leaders to innovate ways by which they could not only fit into the national Zeitgeist, but be a force to be reckoned with: these were desperate moves for desperate times.

These revisions might be a triumph for some Japanese Buddhists, but they were an insidious disaster for Buddhism as a whole, the effects of which are even today still sharply felt by Japanophiles (*shinniji*) and who turn to Zen for social legitimization. Surely, some wholesome changes will come

⁴⁴⁵ See SD 40b.9 (4.3.3.3; 4.3.3.5).

⁴⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serfdom_in_Tibet_controversy.

⁴⁴⁷ See SD 36.1 (1.9.2.14).

⁴⁴⁸ Quoted in L Ron **Gardner**, *Beyond the Power of Now*, Vernal Point Publishing, 2012:67.

⁴⁴⁹ Christian P **Potholm**, *War Wisdom: A cross-cultural sampling*, Lanham: University Press of America, 2015: 44. Another Zen master writes: “[If ordered to] march: tramp, tramp, or shoot: bang, bang. This is the manifestation of the highest Wisdom [of Enlightenment]. The unity of Zen and war ... extends to the farthest reaches of the holy war [now under way].” (Zen Master **Harada** Daiun Sogaku, “The one road of Zen and war,” *Daijō Zen (Mahāyāna Zen)* Nov 1939): quoted in B A Victoria, “Zen and Japanese Militarism,” 1995:322; in D W **Smith** & E G **Burr**, *Understanding World Religions: A road map for justice and peace* [2007], 2nd ed, Lanham: Bowman & Littlefield, 2015:66, & in Steven **Heine**, *Zen Skin, Zen Marrow: Will the real Zen Buddhism please stand up?* Oxford: Oxford Univ Press, 2008:116; also Fujii Tadatōshi, *Heitachi no sensō*, Tokyo, 2001.

⁴⁵⁰ See Piya Tan, *The Spread of Buddhism*: “Buddhism in Japan,” 2005: 6.25+26. Access at <http://dharmafarer.org>. See also **Monastics, sex and marriage**, SD 66.13 esp (2.4).

from their responses. Now that the past is gone, we all must encourage and help them to get back onto the eightfold path.

5.5.5 The Dharma can change even the worst of people

5.5.5.1 Even the darkest night will end in the bright of dawn, but we must awaken to it, and not remain asleep or dreaming. Many of us are blessed with the bright lights of a good life, but we keep looking the wrong way, moving into the dark.⁴⁵¹ We will stumble, we will hurt ourselves—we need to be more mindful and look where we are going. There is only “one way” to go, that is the eightfold path, the best of paths [1.1.3]. If we take the wrong path, it leads either to the animal world or the violent hells. [1.2.1.8]

5.5.5.2 The Aṅgulimāla Sutta (M 86) tells us the moving story of the making of a serial murderer and how he is transformed into a liberated saint with his meeting the Buddha. He is born as **Ahimsaka**, “the non-violent one,” and grows up to be a kind youth. In time, he is sent off to study under a guru, who turns out to be very foolish. The foolish guru listens to malicious gossip about Ahimsaka’s diligence in helping around the guru’s house is simply a ploy for having affairs with his wife and daughter.

The foolish teacher, in a dastardly scheme to destroy the innocent Ahimsaka, demands a “thousand fingers” from him as “guru’s fees” (*dakkhiṇa*). Ahimsaka is at a loss, as he is indeed non-violent. So, at the teacher’s insistence, he has to prove his loyalty and gratitude by getting him those 1,000 human fingers.

Ahimsaka awkwardly turns into a killer, and keeps only a finger from each of his victims. He ties them together in a garland, hanging it across his shoulders, and grows to be almost superhuman in his strength and speed, so that he easily kills all those who have the misfortune to be in his forest. In time, when no one dares to venture into his forest, he raids the villages and kills more to get his 1,000 fingers. The forest and nearby villages are deserted, so that no one dares to live or work in that area.

The king, Pasenadi, is approached by his subjects to stop the bandit, **Aṅguli,māla**, “finger-garland,” as he is now known. Aṅgulimāla’s mother, learning that her son is still alive, and that the king plans to capture him, ventures alone into the forest to warn her beloved son. The Buddha, too, learns of this rising tension, and decides to help Aṅgulimāla, since if he were to kill his own mother, he would forfeit any chance of awakening in this life.⁴⁵²

The Buddha goes alone into the perilous forest to confront Aṅgulimāla. When Aṅgulimāla runs after the Buddha to kill him, the Buddha apparently melds into Aṅgulimāla’s mind, making him think that the Buddha is always way ahead of him, and then appears behind him, so that he is made to run back and forth. Tired of running (pun intended), Aṅgulimāla shouts to the Buddha to “Stop!” The Buddha then stops and turns around, and says, “I’ve stopped, Aṅgulimāla! You stopped, too!”

This is the beginning of Aṅgulimāla’s spiritual transformation. The befuddled bandit questions the Buddha about this strange contradictory remark. The Buddha then explains that he has stopped killing, but Aṅgulimāla has not. Simple as this may sound to us, it immediately and fully clears Aṅgulimāla’s mind. Truly seeing all his wrong, he becomes a streamwinner, and requests the Buddha to accept him as a monk.

When king Pasenadi meets the Buddha, he is shocked with relief and wonder that the Buddha, with neither rod nor sword, neither violence nor weapon, is able to tame such a violent serial killer, when the king, with all his might and army is unable even to capture him. This is an example of the Buddha’s rehabilitative power through the Dharma of transforming lives, even of those who have sunk to their lowest ebb. The wonder works when we allow it.⁴⁵³

5.5.5.3 Then, there is the story of **Tamba,dāṭhika the public executioner**. After turning against his own band of 500 thieves, executing them upon the king’s orders, he becomes public executioner,

⁴⁵¹ See (**Tamo,joti**) **Puggala S** (S 3.21 = Pug 4.19), SD 18.6.

⁴⁵² Killing one’s mother is one of **the 5 ānantarika kamma**, heinous karma, “acts bringing retribution in the immediately following existence” (viz, rebirth in hell), ie, parricide, matricide, killing an arhat, bleeding the Buddha (with ill intent), causing a schism (**Parikuppa S**, A 5.129), SD 40b.2(2.8). On the 5th, see A 10.35, 38; V 2:199 (Devadatta). Regarding the 1st, regarding Ajāta,sattu’s parricide, see D 2,104/1:86 f (SD 8.10).

⁴⁵³ M 86, SD 5.11.

until he is too old to do his job properly. Having to retire at 55, he is despondent as he has no other skills. Sāriputta, learning of his predicament, decides to help him.

The compassionate saint, Sāriputta, visits Tamba,dāṭhika and he respectfully offers him alms. Sāriputta then patiently explains to him on how to keep his mind focused. He should reflect on the fact that he was forced into killing by the king, and did not really enjoy doing it. Having understood that he is not really at fault, at least for the purposes of his mindfulness practice, he is able to overcome his guilt. Keeping his mind positive, in due course, he dies a streamwinner and is reborn in Tusita heaven.

Later, when people ask how is it that such a violent man is able to go to heaven, the Buddha replies that Tambadāṭhika had a spiritual friend who guided him well so that he is able to attain stream-winning in this life. The Buddha then declares, “Measure not the Dharma I’ve taught as being little or much. One saying full of meaning is good enough.”⁴⁵⁴ Reflecting on the occasion, the Buddha uttered this Dhammapada verse:

Even if there were a thousand sayings, composed of useless words,
better is a single line of verse, hearing which, one is pacified. (Dh 100)⁴⁵⁵

5.6 THE NEW SOCIETY OR THE ANCIENT CITY?

5.6.1 Working with others. As Buddhists, we have somehow to work with other religions, and other academic and professional disciplines, with **others**, towards a common peace. There was a time when organized religion was the main cause of widespread wars and massive killings. Thankfully much of this “power” mode of religion has been removed and undermined by widespread education, a more global economy, greater political freedom, and a better understanding of human behavior and the nature of religion. As Buddhists, we should at least work to ensure that Buddhism does not cause, or support, or even let wars and mass killings occur amongst us.

5.6.2 Pax Gaia. There can never be a true and common peace—the Pax Buddhica only works for the individual [5.1.2.2]—there can and must be **Pax Gaia**, whole-earth peace. We may dream of a new or ideal society, but even if it is possible, we cannot exist in splendid isolation. The world will sooner or later encroach upon us; the world always encroaches upon us as long as we are unawakened. Anyway, such dreams are futile as the Buddha has already pointed out to us that there is already such an ideal community—in the ancient city of **the Nagara Sutta** (S 12.65) [1.4.1.5].

Only when we overcome our own defilements—willing to renounce all our views—will we gain the divine space that is **the ancient city**. For this city is not of this world, but beyond space and time. It is only reached by the noble eightfold path, a path that we can and must only cultivate by disciplining our own body and speech, by taming our mind and freeing our heart, and breaking through into the wisdom that opens the door to nirvana. [15.3]

5.6.3 Noble truth. While we are in this world—and our own world of faults and fancies—we can and must learn all that the world is trying to teach us. Then, the sufferings we see and imperfections we are, become a **noble truth**. We begin to nobly see for ourself how they arise, and knowing that, we better understand how they will end. Then, we must ourself walk that path alone: for, it is a path for one, by one, to the one. But we will soon see that there are eight of us on that same journey. [1.7; 15.3]

6 Right effort (*sammā,vāyāma*; Skt *saṃyag,vyāyāma*)

6.1 BRIEF DEFINITIONS

6.1.0 The aggregate of concentration

6.1.0.1 Now we come to the third and last of the 3 aggregates of the path, that is, the aggregate of mental concentration (*samādhi-k,khandha*). This is a straightforward set, as it deals with practical

⁴⁵⁴ *Mayā desita,dhammassa appam vā bahum vā’ti mā pamāṇam gaṇhatha. Eka,vācā’pi hi attha,nissitā seyyā-vāti.*

⁴⁵⁵ See **Tamba,dāṭhika Cora,ghātaka Vatthu** (DhA 8.1/2:203-209 ad Dh 100). See also SD 48.1 (7.4.3.2).

meditation. Meditation, especially dhyana (*jhāna*), as we know, can only be fully attained when the mind is free from all distractions and thoughts as we know them in daily life.

6.1.0.2 The aggregate of mental concentration (*samādhi-k,khandha*) comprises:

(6) right effort	<i>sammā,vāyāma</i>	[6]
(7) right mindfulness	<i>sammā sati</i>	[7]
(8) right concentration	<i>sammā samādhi</i>	[8]

6.1.1 Brief explanation

6.1.1.1 Briefly, the 4 right efforts (*sammā vāyāma*) are explained as the efforts (1) to restrain, (2) to abandon, (3) to cultivate and (4) to maintain. The first two deal with unwholesome states, while the last two with wholesome states.

6.1.1.2 More fully, the 4 right efforts are as follows [6.3.0]:

(1) the effort of restraining	an unarisen bad, unwholesome state;	<i>saṃvara padhāna</i>
(2) the effort of abandoning	an arisen bad, unwholesome state;	<i>pahāna padhāna</i>
(3) the effort of cultivating	an unarisen good, wholesome state;	<i>bhāvanā padhāna</i>
(4) the effort of guarding [maintaining]	an arisen good, wholesome state.	<i>anurakkhaṇa padhāna</i>

6.1.2 The 4 right efforts

The 4 right efforts (*sammā,vāyāma*) or strivings (*samma-p,padhāna*) are defined in the following Suttas, amongst others:

Saṅgīti Sutta	D 33,1.11(2)/3:221 + (10)/3:226	
Mahā Sakul’udāyi Sutta	M 72,16/2:11	SD 49.6a
(Padhāna) Pācīna Sutta	S 49.1/5:244;	
Cattāro Padhāna Sutta	A 4.13/2:15	
Samvar’ādi Sutta	A 4.14/2:16 f	SD 10.2
(Sammā) Padhāna Sutta	A 4.69/2:74	
Samma-p,padhāna Vibhaṅga	Vbh 390/8.1/208	

In these texts, the 4 right efforts are defined as follows:

Bhikshus, there are these 4 right strivings. What are the four?

(1) Here, bhikshus, a monk brings forth desire for the restraint of unarisen bad unwholesome states. *saṃvara*

He makes an effort, rouses energy, applies his mind and strives.

(2) Here, bhikshus, a monk brings forth desire for the abandoning of arisen bad unwholesome states. *pahāna*

He makes an effort, rouses energy, applies his mind and strives.

(3) Here, bhikshus, a monk brings forth desire for the cultivating of unarisen wholesome states. *bhāvanā*

He makes an effort, rouses energy, applies his mind and strives.

(4) Here, bhikshus, a monk brings forth desire for the guarding [maintaining] of arisen wholesome states. *anurakkhaṇa*

He makes an effort, rouses energy, applies his mind and strives.

These, bhikshus, are the 4 right strivings.

6.2 THE RIGHT EFFORTS: MUNDANE AND SUPRAMUNDANE

6.2.1 Commentaries

6.2.1.1 The Vibhaṅga gives a sutta analysis of the 4 right efforts (Vbh 208-210) which are commented on in **the Sammoha,vinodanī**, the Vibhaṅga Commentary (VbhA 289-301). Buddhaghosa’s commentary on them is found in his **Visuddhi,magga** (Vism 22.35/679). [6.2.2]

6.2.1.2 The Vibhaṅga gives an Abhidhamma analysis of the 4 right efforts (Vbh 211-214), and its commentary in **the Sammoha,vinodanī** (VbhA 301 f). The Abhidhamma analysis gives only the heading of the method of teaching analysed in the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī (the first Abhidhamma book) (VbhA 301). [6.2.3]

6.2.2 The mundane right efforts

6.2.2.1 Briefly, the mundane right efforts are as follows. The bad unwholesome states are greed, hate, delusion and the defilements associated with them. On the positive side, there is desire (*chanda*), the wholesome will power or wish. Words like endeavour (*vāyāma*), energy (*ussāha*) and striving (*padhāna*) all refer to effort (*virīya*). [6.2.2.2]

6.2.2.2 It should be noted that the Abhidhamma gives a thesaurus-like register of words that work as synonyms for effort—*virīy'ārambha, nikkama, parakkama, uyyāma, vāyāma, ussāha, ussoḥhī, thāma, dhiti, asithila, parakkamatā, anikkhitta, chandatā, anikkhitta, dhuratā, dhura, sampaggaha, virīya, virīy'indriya, virīya, bala, sammā, vama* (Dhs §22 = Vbh §393)⁴⁵⁶—all of which should be understood as meaning “effort.”

Although there appears to be some subtle differences amongst their English translations [footnote above], this is an English issue, not a Pali one. This is an example of Pali polynymy, where there are many words all of which have the same sense or are used in the same sense simultaneously.⁴⁵⁷ [1.3.1-1.3.2]

6.2.3 The supramundane right efforts

6.2.3.1 The Vibhaṅga, in its Abhidhamma analysis of the 4 right efforts, gives a long technical explanation. Essentially, it says that right effort is the awakening-factor of energy (*virīya sambojjhāna*) in the supramundane path which accomplishes all the 4 functions of right effort simultaneously (Vbh 211-214)—so that they now arise naturally as “energy” in a saint. [6.3.3.2]

6.2.3.2 Such an accomplishment needs the support of dhyana (*jhāna*), when the mind is calm and clear, which is then able to directly see into true reality. Right view empowers right effort (*samma-p, padhāna*) to become right energy (*sammā, vāyāma*), which expedites our journey further along the path of awakening.⁴⁵⁸

Basically, “right effort” (*sammā, vāyāma*) or “right striving” (*samma-p, padhāna*) refer to the application of the will in the unawakened, that is, those outside the path. In the case of streamwinners and the other saints, their effort is known simply as “energy” (*virīya*), as it arises naturally and spontaneously in a wholesome mind.⁴⁵⁹

6.3 PRACTICE

6.3.0 The Catu Padhāna Sutta (A 4.14) [SD 10.2]

Although the 4 right efforts can be effectively used in general problem-solving, especially in the overcoming of negative habits and cultivating good ones, they are specially meant to be applied to mindfulness and meditation exercises, in the following manner (by way of summarizing **the (Catu) Padhāna Sutta** (A 4.14), and a few new strategies):

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) The effort to <i>prevent</i> the arising of unarisen bad unwholesome states. | Understanding the nature of <u>the 5 mental hindrances</u> [6.3.1.3] and <u>the restraint of the senses</u> (<i>indriya, samvara</i>). |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

⁴⁵⁶ These words are Abhidhamma stock, meaning: “putting forth (mental) effort, toiling, endeavour, aspiring, effort, industry, perseverance, vigour, stability, unflinching endeavour, not giving up on a wish, not giving up on a task, giving support to a task, energy, spiritual faculty of effort, spiritual power of energy, right effort” (Dhs §22/12 = Vbh §393/208).

⁴⁵⁷ Cf polysemy, where a single word has many meanings, some or all of which may apply simultaneously: see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2).

⁴⁵⁸ On the role of dhyana on the supramundane path, see Vbh §§409, 415, 419, 426 (Vbh 211-214).

⁴⁵⁹ On the difference between “effort” or “striving” and “energy,” see SD 10.2 (1.3).

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (2) The effort to <i>abandon</i> arisen bad unwholesome states. | Right thought. Do not comment on or pursue the thought: “Let it come, let it go.” <u>Perceptions of impermanence</u> (<i>anicca,saññā</i>) and <u>of foulness</u> (<i>asubha,saññā</i>). ⁴⁶⁰ Diligence in putting forth effort in mindfulness (eg, sitting in meditation). |
| (3) The effort to <i>cultivate</i> [practise] unarisen good wholesome states. | Understanding and practising <u>the 7 awakening-factors</u> [SD 10.15]. |
| (4) The effort to <i>guard</i> [maintain] arisen good wholesome states. | Refining the practice of the 7 awakening-factors; <u>wise attention</u> (<i>yoniso manasikāra</i>) towards all sense-experiences (that is, regarding them simply as being “impermanent”); ⁴⁶¹ <u>spiritual friendship</u> (<i>kalyāṇa,mittatā</i>). ⁴⁶² |

6.3.1 The effort to restrain (*saṁvara padhāna*)

6.3.1.1 From such texts as **the (Cātu) Padhāna Sutta** (A 4.14), we can define the first right effort as “**the effort to restrain (or prevent) the arising of unarisen unwholesome states**” through understanding the nature of the 5 mental hindrances [6.3.1.3] and sense-restraint (*indriya,saṁvara*). The 5 mental hindrances arise from our physical sense-bases and the mind.

They distract us from mental cultivation because all the sense-objects occur simultaneously, so to speak. The mind (as attention) has to choose which particular sense-objects to focus on. This is difficult because they seem to demand our attention all at the same time. To worsen the situation, the mind creates its own objects which further have to be managed.

6.3.1.2 Understandably, the (Cātu) Padhāna Sutta prescribes sense-restraint to overcome the distractions arising from the capricious sense-objects. Essentially, “sense-restraint” means *not paying any attention to the sense-objects*—as they come, so we let them go. This is the best way of restraining oneself from unarisen negative states.

6.3.1.3 The 5 mental hindrances (*pañca,nīvaraṇa*)⁴⁶³ are traditionally listed as sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt.

(1) **Sensual desire** (*kāma-c,chanda*) is literally the desire or wish for sensual pleasures. We do not merely see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think. We perceive the objects before us as being pleasant, unpleasant or neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant. But the whole process is a built-in reactivity that projects values of pleasantness, unpleasantness or neither onto our experiences.

What we perceive as familiar and pleasant, we see as desirable. Hence, we try to grasp them; if we think we have grasped them, we cling to them. But what we cling to must slip away. As long as we do not see and accept their impermanent nature, we continue to be enticed and distracted by them. These experiences fool us and so weaken our wisdom so that we are unable to focus on a single wholesome object such as the breath.

(2) **Ill will** is the shadow of sensual pleasures, its flipside. When there is desire for sensual pleasures, there is also a dislike or ill will towards what distracts us from the quest for sensual pleasures or from enjoying them. We are also flustered when we are unable to conjure up those sensual pleasures, or when they do not last for a longer duration.

The fact is that no matter how long a time we may have to enjoy a certain sense-pleasure, it is never enough. And when it seems to last longer than we expect, we begin to lose interest in that sense-object and we start chasing after another one, and so on.

(3) **Sloth and torpor** (*thīna,middha*) naturally follow like a flood of sense-objects dragging us around in swing between liking and disliking. Or, we might even be tenaciously troubled by a parti-

⁴⁶⁰ That is, reflecting on the unattractive aspects of the object (thought).

⁴⁶¹ See, eg, (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

⁴⁶² S 5:2-30; A 1:14-18; It 10. See **Upakkilesa S** (M 128,8-13/3:155-157), SD 5.8; also see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004 ch 5 (on Sāriputta & Moggallāna). On the 4 right efforts, further see **Cātu Padhāna S** (A 4.14), SD 10.2.

⁴⁶³ On the 5 hindrances, see *Nīvaraṇa*, SD 32.1; see *Bhāvanā*, SD 15.1(8.2).

cular thought or chain of thoughts. Sloth and torpor are both mental states but *sloth* is a bodily tiredness or stiffness—due to a bad posture, a long sitting or an unsuitable meditation object—that saps our mind of its focus. When it is the result of being distracted by sensual lust, then, it is a mental tiredness.

Torpor is a mental tiredness—the mind drained of most, or all, of its energy. It simply wants to shut down. Semantically, *thīna* is identical to *middha*—both are states of stiffness. Torpor, however, is a mental stiffness, a heavy mind stuck in itself, so to speak. It is a kind of dark lazy mental state that blinds us into sleep if we are unaware of it and do not correct it.

(4) **Restlessness and worry** (*uddhacca, kukkuccha*) are, in effect, just the opposite of sloth and torpor. We become overly excited or troubled by a lack of focus and mindfulness. Essentially, *restlessness* arises when we are lost in some desirable future state—this sensual lust is directed to what has not yet occurred. For example, distracted from our meditation, we think of what we will do once we finished meditating. So, we want to jump into the occasion right away, as it were, and so we are distracted.

Worry or even remorse in its negative sense grips us when we allow ourselves to be troubled by the past, of things done or undone, and how it should have been. Since the past is gone (and the future, not yet come), we can do nothing about either, except get into a negative wishful state. Here, we see lust wishing to relive the past or dreaming about what could be. Either way, we lose touch with the present and the meditation-object.

(5) **Doubt** (*vicikicchā*) arises when we are drowned in the swinging clutches of liking and disliking, the shifting twilight of sloth and torpor, and the highs and lows of restlessness and worry. We seem to have lost the ground and bearing. Nothing that we have learned seems to help, and we even begin to feel uncertain of what we know. Doubt is the most crippling of the hindrances when it finally drives us to give up our practice.

6.3.1.4 The right effort to prevent the hindrances or to mitigate, even remove, them, is that of **sense-restraint**. This is given in a well known stock passage that essentially instructs us to at once turn our attention away from the source of distraction—that is, any sight, sight, smell, taste, touch or thought. We should “grasp neither its sign nor its detail” (*na nimitta-g, gāhī hoti nānuyyañjana-g, gāhī*). The “*sign*” here is our very first glimpse of an object signified by “thinking” (*vitakka*), or “first thought,” while the “*detail(s)*” refers to our “pondering” (*vicāra*) or examining it.⁴⁶⁴ This is our front-line defence against mental distractions.

6.3.2 The effort to abandon (*pahāna padhāna*)

6.3.2.1 When we notice a distraction before us, or we have not fully removed a pervasive distraction, then we apply the second kind of right effort, that of **abandoning** the distraction, which is, after all, a *bad unwholesome state* that weakens the mind by sapping away our mental energies. **The (Cātu) Padhāna Sutta** (A 4.14) instructs us here not to harbour any wrong thoughts—that is, those of sensual desire (*kāma, vitakka*), hatred (ill will) (*vyāpāda, vitakka*) or violence (*vihimsā, vitakka*).

In other words, **the second right thought** (or right intention) is that of renunciation (*nekkhamma, sankappa*), of non-violence (*avyāpāda, sankappa*) and of non-cruelty (*avihimsā, sankappa*). [2.5.2]

6.3.2.2 In practical meditation, our teachers would often advise us to neither comment on nor pursue the distracting thought, but simply: “Let it come, let it go.” In an important way, this is an extension of the “action of non-action” of the first right effort (of sense-restraint). Hence, this right effort is even more effective when we, having started with the first right effort, at once, unrelentingly move on with the second right effort.

6.3.2.3 We can augment our second effort—that of rejecting the distraction—by practising the **perception of impermanence** (*anicca, saññā*). We simply note, or rather “feel” (directly seeing, without any thought), the real nature of the distraction, that it is of the nature to rise and fall. We may get a

⁴⁶⁴ See **(Cātu) Padhāna S** (A 10.14,2), SD 10.2. This sense-restraint passage is stock: **D** 2,64/1:70, **10,2,2**/-1:207, **33**,1.11(10)/3:225; **M** 27,15/1:180, **33,20**/1:223, **38,35**/1:269, **51,16**/1:346, **53,8**/1:355, **94,18**/2:162, **101,33**/2:226; **S** 35.120/4:104, **35.239**/4:176; **A** 3.16/1:113, **4.14**/2:16, **4.37**/2:39, **4.164**/2:152 (×4), **4.198**,11/-2:210, **5.76**,12/3:99 f, **5.140**,11/3:163, **10.99**,6/5:206, **11.18**,23/5:351. For a detailed analysis, see Vism 1.53-69/20-22. For a study, see SD 19.14.

glimpse of the truth that there is nothing there that is attractive or repulsive—our thinking makes it so.⁴⁶⁵

6.3.2.4 If the distraction persists, especially if it is one of a lustful nature, then we need stronger medicine. This is when we can gently introduce some perception of foulness (*asubha,saññā*), that is, reflect on the object (usually a body-part) as being foul and unattractive—this is perhaps the best antidote to a pathological attachment due to sensual lust. If it is an image of an attractive person, we reflect that there are other aspects of that person which are simply unattractive. If we are to examine anyone up close (or examine ourself so), we are but a skin-bag of flesh and bone with goo and gunk oozing out through the 9 openings in our body.⁴⁶⁶

The Subhā Therī,gātha has a reflective passage on the impurities of the eyes (Thī 395).⁴⁶⁷ **The Vijaya Sutta** (Sn 1.11) is a powerful reflection on the impure nature of our body in which the Buddha teaches as a reflection for a lovesick monk who is infatuated by the looks of a beautiful courtesan, Sirimā, and whose rotting carcass lies before them.⁴⁶⁸ After doing such reflections, it is vitally important that we close them with some cultivation of lovingkindness in order to prevent any build-up of disgust or negative emotions. [2]

6.3.3 The effort to cultivate (*bhāvanā padhāna*)

6.3.3.1 The third right effort, despite its position, can be practised at any time, especially when we are not troubled by any distractions. For most of us, however, we surely will benefit from this practice as a follow-up to the first 2 right efforts by way of reinforcing our mind with wholesome spiritual energies. As long as we are engaged in some wholesome practice, it is unlikely that we will be distracted by external sense-objects.

6.3.3.2 The (Cātu) Padhāna Sutta (A 4.14) defines the “effort to cultivate” in terms of understanding and practising the 7 awakening-factors (*satta,bojjhaṅga*), thus:

The 7 awakening-factors (*satta bojjhaṅga*) [SD 10.15]

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. mindfulness, | <i>sati sambojjhaṅga</i> | |
| 2. investigation of mental states, | <i>dhamma,vicaya sambojjhaṅga</i> | |
| 3. effort or energy, | <i>virīya sambojjhaṅga</i> | |
| 4. zest (joyful interest), | <i>pīti sambojjhaṅga</i> | |
| 5. tranquillity, | <i>passaddhi sambojjhaṅga</i> | |
| 6. concentration and | <i>samādhi sambojjhaṅga</i> | |
| 7. equanimity. | <i>upekkhā sambojjhaṅga</i> | (M 2,21/1:11), SD 30.3 |

6.3.3.3 This list appears in **the Sabb’āsava Sutta** (M 2), in its instructions on “influxes that are to be abandoned by cultivation” (*bhāvanā pahatabb’āsava*). There, the Buddha instructs us as follows:

“Here, bhikshus, a monk, wisely reflecting,
cultivates the awakening-factor of mindfulness,
*dependent on solitude,*⁴⁶⁹ *dependent on fading away (of lust) [dispassion],*
dependent on cessation (of suffering), ripening in letting go (of defilements) [dependent on relinquishment].”⁴⁷⁰

The italicized lines are stock—called the *viveka,nissita* pericope⁴⁷¹—and appears in relation to each of the other six awakening-factors. The stock passage actually begins with the words, “**wisely reflecting**” (*paṭisankhā yoniso*), that is, fully attending to the awakening-factor without being distracted in any

⁴⁶⁵ For details on the perception of impermanence, see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

⁴⁶⁶ The 9 openings or “doors” (*dvāra*) are those of the 2 eyes, the 2 ears, the 2 nostrils, the mouth, the urethra, the rectum (Sn 197): see SD 29.14 (3.2).

⁴⁶⁷ **Subhā Thī** (Thī 366-399), SD 20.7.

⁴⁶⁸ **Vijaya S** or **Kāya,vicchandanika S** (Sn 1.11/193-206), SD 3.8(6).

⁴⁶⁹ Here “solitude” (*viveka*), or seclusion, has a special reference to the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇā*): see SD 30.3 (2.7.3).

⁴⁷⁰ *Viveka,nissitaṃ virāga,nissitaṃ nirodha,nissitaṃ vossagga,pariṇāmiṃ*: see SD 30.3 (2.7.3).

⁴⁷¹ See **Viveka,nissita**, SD 20.4.

way. In simple terms, “**dependent on solitude**” (*viveka,nissita*) refers physically to resorting to a suitable place for meditation; psychologically, it is the overcoming of the 5 mental hindrances [6.3.1.3].

When all the hindrances are overcome, dhyana arises, which removes lust (at least temporarily)—this is what is meant by “**dependent on the fading away (of lust)**” (*virāga,nissita*). This process, in other words, depends on our attaining dhyana to overcome lust (*rāga*), that is, being attached to the body and its pleasures—this refers to “**dependent on the cessation (of suffering)**.”

Dhyana provides us with the joy (as mental energy) to rid our minds of all distractions so that it is calm and clear like a perfect mirror. Thus, when we emerge from dhyana, with our still calm and clear mind, we can directly examine true reality. This is when we are able to let go of the world and all its defilements (at least temporarily)—this is said to be “**dependent on letting go**.”

6.3.3.4 There is a strikingly close parallel between the full “fruit of recluseship” (*sāmañña,phala*) account of **the dhyanas** and **the 7 awakening-factors**. The wording of the introduction to the dhyana stock formula in many places exactly parallels the awakening-factor process formula, as evident from this comparative table between the awakening-factors and the “fruits of recluseship” dhyana passages, such as those in **the Sāmañña,phala Sutta** (M 2):

the 7 awakening-factors	The “fruits of recluseship” (<i>sāmañña,phala</i>) formula ⁴⁷²
(1) mindfulness	“He establishes <u>mindfulness</u> before him” (<i>parimukhaṃ satim̐ upaṭṭhappetvā ...</i>). (M 2,67/1:71)
(2) dharma-investigation	“The monk <u>sees</u> that these 5 hindrances [6.3.1.3] are abandoned in him; <u>seeing</u> that these 5 hindrances are abandoned in him ...” (<i>bhikkhu ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassati; tass’ime pañca nīvaraṇe pahīne attani samanupassato</i>) (M 2,75.1/1:73) ⁴⁷³
(3) effort	[energy arises at the <i>sati sambojjhaṅga</i> level. In fact, the first three stages work together;] ⁴⁷⁴
(4) zest	“gladness arises; because of gladness, <u>zest</u> arises; when the mind is <u>zestful</u> .” (<i>pāmujaṃ jayati; pamuditassa pīti jayati; pīti,manassa</i>) (M 2,75.1)
(5) tranquillity	“the body becomes <u>tranquil</u> ; when the body is tranquil, he knows happiness” (<i>kāyo passambhati; passaddha,kāyo sukhaṃ vedeti</i>) (M 2,75.1)
(6) concentration	“When he is happy, his mind is <u>concentrated</u> ... he enters and remains in the 1 st dhyana, accompanied by initial application and sustained application. Free of initial application and sustained application, with zest and happiness born of seclusion, he enters and remains in the 2 nd dhyana, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and happiness <u>born of concentration</u> ...” (<i>sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati ... sa,vitakkaṃ sa,vicāraṃ viveka,jaṃ pīti,sukhaṃ paṭhamāṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati ... avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhi,jaṃ pīti,sukhaṃ dutiya-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati ...</i>) (M 2,75.2+77/1:73 f)
(7) equanimity	“and he experiences happiness with the body. He enters and remains in the 3 rd dhyana, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in <u>equanimity</u> and mindfulness.’ ... He enters and dwells in the 4 th dhyana, with mindfulness fully purified by <u>equanimity</u> .” (<i>sukhaṃ ca kāyena paṭi-saṃvedeti yan taṃ ariyā acikkhanti upekkhako satimā sukha,vihārīti</i>)

⁴⁷² See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,81/1:75), SD 8.10. Cf **Mahā Assapura S** (M 39,10-18/1:273-277), SD 10.13.

⁴⁷³ Gethin: “The parallel between *dhmma-vicaya* and *samanupassati* is less explicit than the rest, but in this kind of context surely any derivative of *passati* [“he sees”] can be seen as connoting *paññā* (= *dhmma-vicaya*). Cf Vbh 194-202 (passim) which identifies *anupassanā* [“contemplation”] in the context of the *satipaṭṭhāna* formula with *paññā*.” (2001:171, trs added)

⁴⁷⁴ Gethin, however, thinks that “[o]nly *virīya-sambojjhaṅga* fails to find a direct parallel here.” (2001:171). On the difference between “effort” or “energy” (*vāyāma*) and “striving” (*padhāna*), see (6.3.3.2).

tatiya-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati ... upekkhā,sati,pārisuddhiṃ catuttha-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.) (M 2,81)

6.3.4 The effort to guard (*anurakkhana padhāna*)

6.3.4.1 The fourth right effort is that of guarding or maintaining the arisen wholesome state. If we are still unawakened, we must continue to refine the 7 awakening-factors. If we are unable to attain dhyana (for the sake of attaining non-returning or arhathood), then, we can still cultivate some level of samadhi (mental concentration) for the sake of upgrading our mindfulness so that we are able to see more directly into true reality and attain at least streamwinning, if not once-returning.

6.3.4.2 The method recommended by **the (Catu) Padhāna Sutta** (A 4.14) is that we should guard the “auspicious sign” of any of the 7 stages of bodily decay, that is, a skeleton, a worm-infested (corpse), a discoloured (corpse), a festering (corpse), or a fissured (corpse), or a bloated (corpse).⁴⁷⁵ These perceptions appear in a set of 9 stages of bodily decay (also called the “charnel-ground meditations,” *sīvathika*) in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22) and **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10),⁴⁷⁶ where *vinīlaka* (discoloured), *vipubbaka* (festering) and *uddhumataka* (bloated up) describe the first type of corpse; *puḷavaka* (worm-infested) is one of the 2nd kind; and *aṭṭhika* (the skeleton) comprises the last 7 kinds (D 22,9 f/2:296). This simplified Aṅguttara listing is probably older than the more systematized set of Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

6.3.4.3 The Subcommentary (*ṭīkā*) says that “*bhaddaka* means beautiful, by way of the suppression of such inauspicious bad states as the hindrances, and auspicious by way of the singular benefit, difficult to obtain, by way of the ridding of lust. The direct knowledge of the samadhi-sign is not difficult to obtain when there is a direct opposition to lust.”⁴⁷⁷ (AAṬ:Be 2239).

This kind of perception, however, should be done with the supervision of an experienced meditation teacher. The teacher will interview us and, if he knows our personality, he will instruct us on which stage of decay is a suitable subject. Moreover, the cultivation of lovingkindness should always be done with this meditation, usually at the end of it. This is to ensure that we would not harbour any strong sense of disgust or any negative emotions.

6.3.4.4 For the lay practitioner, it is sufficient to practise **wise attention** (*yoniso manasikāra*) by perceiving the impermanence in all sense-experiences (that is, regarding them simply as “impermanent”),⁴⁷⁸ and also cultivate **spiritual friendship** (*kalyāṇa,mittatā*). Spiritual friendship here refers to the tutelage of an experienced meditation teacher, especially the encouragement and guidance given by such a teacher to the pupil who has difficulty in meditation.⁴⁷⁹

7 Right mindfulness (*sammā,sati*; Skt *samyak,smṛti*)

7.0 DEFINITIONS

7.0.1 Right mindfulness (*sammā,sati*) is traditionally defined as the contemplations (*anupassanā*)—meaning, literally “seeing over and again”—of the body, feelings, the mind and mind-objects. As a set, these are famously known as the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*sati ’paṭṭhāna = sati*, “mindfulness” +

⁴⁷⁵ A 4.14,5 (SD 10.2). “The perception of a skeleton ... a bloated (corpse),” *aṭṭhikaṃ,saññaṃ puḷavaka,-saññaṃ vinīlaka,saññaṃ vipubbaka,saññaṃ vicchidaka,saññaṃ uddhumataka,saññaṃ*.

⁴⁷⁶ Respectively, D 22,7/2:295 (SD 13.2) and M 10,14/1:58 (SD 13.3).

⁴⁷⁷ **Bhaddakan ti** *abhaddakānaṃ nīvaraṇ’ādi,pāpa,dhammānaṃ vikkhambhanaṃ rāga,vigāmanena ekanta,-hitattā dullabhattā ca bhaddakānaṃ sundaraṃ. Na hi aññaṃ samādhi.nimittaṃ evaṃ dullabhaṃ rāgassa uju,-vipaccanīka,bhūtaṃ atthi* (AAṬ:Be 2239). See **Bhaddeka,ratta S** (M 131), SD 8.9 (1).

⁴⁷⁸ See, eg, (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

⁴⁷⁹ **Spiritual friendship**, SD 8.1; also S 5:2-30; A 1:14-18; It 10. See also **Upakkilesa S** (M 128,8-13/3:155-157), SD 5.8; also see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, 2004 ch 5 (on Sāriputta & Moggallāna).

upaṭṭhāna, “support). They are fully explained in **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10),⁴⁸⁰ and more extensively, in relation to the 4 truths and related teachings in **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22).⁴⁸¹

7.0.2 Right mindfulness is the vital foundation (*upaṭṭhāna*) of any Buddhist meditation as mental training for present happiness and imminent spiritual liberation. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta defines *sati-paṭṭhāna*, “focus of mindfulness,” or simply “mindfulness meditation” as follows:

Here, bhikshus,
a monk⁴⁸² dwells⁴⁸³ exertive, clearly aware, mindful,
contemplating the body in the body, ...
contemplating feelings in the feelings, ...
contemplating the mind in the mind, ...
contemplating dharmas in the dharmas, ...
removing covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world.”⁴⁸⁴

The details of such instructions are fully laid out in **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10), SD 13.3, and **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22), SD 13.2. For practical purposes, it is best to study and reflect on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta which deals only with the 4 focuses of mindfulness, while the Mahā Sati-paṭṭhāna, typical of a Dīgha sutta, gives a broader survey of theoretical teachings.

7.0.3 The **Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** goes on to define the practice of *satipatthāna* as follows:

And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell **contemplating the body in the body**?

Here, bhikshus, a monk who has gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down, and having crossed his legs and keeping his body upright, establishes mindfulness fully before him. (M 10,4.2) SD 13.3

These instructions are only given here in connection with the contemplation of the body, suggesting that the other three contemplations should be done successively. This may well be the best practice, if we are to attain any deep level of samadhi, even dhyana. However, in practice, we naturally can and should attend to whichever contemplation that demands our attention during our practice. (The details of the key terms in the above passage are given in the M 10 translation at SD 13.3 and its commentary at SD 13.1.)

7.0.4 Essentially, right mindfulness is a state of observing physical and mental phenomena as they arise within and around us. Naturally, we would begin by watching:

- (1) the body (*kāya*) (that is, the breath, bodily postures, our actions, body parts, the 4 elements and the stages of bodily decomposition after death) [7.1],
- (2) feelings (*vedanā*) (whether they are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral) [7.2],
- (3) mental states (*citta*) (such as whether we are distracted by lust or not, concentrated or not, etc) [7.3] and

⁴⁸⁰ **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10), SD 13.3, is the locus classicus for the practice of the focuses of mindfulness, as it deals with just these 4 contemplations. It is clearly the older of the two, since it has no extraneous material as in Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S (D 22): see SD 13.1 (1.1.1).

⁴⁸¹ **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna** (D 22), SD 13.2, contains a long section (about as long as the *satipatthāna* section) on the 4 truths, which is identical with the exposition in **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141), SD 11.11.

⁴⁸² Here “a monk” (*bhikkhu*) may refer to either an ordained monastic or anyone who is meditating (here, doing satipatthana) (DA 3:756; MA 1:241; VbhA 216 f; cf SnA 251): see SD 13.1 (3.1.1.5). Note that in **Dhānañjāni S** (M 97) Sāriputta teaches the divine abodes to the layman Dhānañjāni (addressing him directly) (M 97,32.2), SD 4.9, and in (**Nānā,kaṛaṇa**) **Mettā S 1** (A 4.125), the subject of each of the stock passages on the 4 divine abodes is “a certain person” (*ekacco puggalo*) (A 4.125,2 etc), SD 33.9.

On meditation as renunciation, see **Hālidakāni S 1** (S 22.3/3:9-12), SD 10.12; **Bhāvanā**, SD 15.1 (14.7); **Sexuality**, SD 31.7 (1.6.2).

⁴⁸³ *Ārāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke abhijjhā,domanassam*. Here we find 4 of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc’indriya*) in action: see SD 13.1 (4.2).

⁴⁸⁴ For explanations of the key words in this passage, see SD 13.1 (3.1-3.3).

- (4) dharmas (*dhamma*) (realities arising in our mind, such as the 5 aggregates, the 5 hindrances, the 4 noble truths and the 7 awakening-factors).⁴⁸⁵

7.0.5 The 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), then, are meditative focus arising through (1) body-based meditation (*kāyānupassanā*), (2) feeling-based meditation (*vedanā'nupassanā*), (3) mind-based meditation (*cittānupassanā*), and (4) phenomena-based meditation (*dhammānupassanā*) [7.0.4].

We begin by using the proper posture for comfort (so that the body remains as still as possible) and start off, for example, with breath meditation. As we meditate, we closely attend to or “note” whatever feelings that arise whether they are pleasant, painful or neutral, just as they are without further evaluation. Then, we note whatever thoughts (emotion, etc) that arise in a similar manner. Finally, we note whatever phenomena or mental states that arise, just as they are.

After this initial practice, these 4 focuses are applied as they arise and as necessary.⁴⁸⁶ Let us now briefly look at each of these 4 focuses of mindfulness.

7.1 BODY-BASED MEDITATION

7.1.1 In practical terms, we usually begin our meditation with a **contemplation of the body** (*kāyānupassanā*), that is, with a body-based meditation.⁴⁸⁷ The most popular body-based meditation is the breath meditation; but there are also walking meditation and the awareness of body-parts.⁴⁸⁸ The purpose of body-based meditation is basically to calm the body to the extent that we do not need to bother about it at all. Then, we are able to direct our attention fully to feelings and then to the mind.

7.1.2 For beginners, it is unlikely that we will be able to attain all the progressive stages of contemplating the body, feelings, the mind and realities all in one sitting. It is more likely that we will need to spend some good time cultivating a body-based meditation. In fact, it is helpful to master at least one body-based meditation, normally the breath meditation,⁴⁸⁹ as our “base meditation,” that is, a source of peaceful space we can return to for a respite or recharging of our mental energies.

7.2 FEELING-BASED MEDITATION

7.2.1 As a precursor to dhyana, the **contemplation of feeling** (*vedanā'nupassanā*) of any bodily sensations is done so that we fully focus on the mind. A focused mind means that it is fully free from the body—the mind then does not need to process any sense-data at all (for that duration). This also means that we have to rid the mind of all the 5 mental hindrances [6.1.3.1]. We will then attain and dwell in dhyana according to our meditation ability. On emerging from dhyana, such bodily sensations, when they return, are clearly seen as they truly are.⁴⁹⁰

7.2.2 Beginners who are not dhyana-attainers must progress from the body-based meditation to observing thoughts and feelings. In meditation language, however, both are generically referred to as

⁴⁸⁵ For details of each of the 4 focuses of mindfulness, see SD 13.1 (3.4-3.6).

⁴⁸⁶ For details, see **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) @ SD 13.1+3.

⁴⁸⁷ See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10,4-31/1:56-59), SD 13.3.

⁴⁸⁷ See esp (**Anubaddha**) **Bhikkhu S** (S 47.3,4/5:143), SD 24.6a. For **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10) & its comys, see Soma Thera, *The Way of Mindfulness*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1981. An easy modern approach is found in Nyanaponika, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, London: Rider, 1962, & U Silananda, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, Boston: Wisdom Books, 1990.

⁴⁸⁷ See **The body in Buddhism**, SD 29.6a (2.1).

⁴⁸⁸ For details, see **Kāya,gatā,sati S** (M 119/3:88-99), SD 12.21.

⁴⁸⁹ See **Anāpāna,sati S** (M 118), SD 7.13.

⁴⁹⁰ **Anāpāna,sati S** (M 118), in fact, gives three kinds or stages of the breath meditation: (1) the beginner's breath satipathana (M 118,15-22/3:82 f); (2) the perfection of satipathana in breath meditation (M 118,23-28/3:83-85), ie, where the hindrances [6.3.1.3] are overcome; and (3) the perfection of the awakening-factors in breath meditation (M 118,29-44/3:85-88), ie, where the defilements are overcome, leading to awakening.

feelings,⁴⁹¹ which are *bodily* (painful, pleasant), *mental* (sorrowful, joyful), and *neither pleasant nor painful* (neutral).

When we experience bodily feelings—that is, our reactions to the physical sense-bases: the eye, ear, nose, tongue or body—we simply regard them as being *impermanent*, or notice how they rise and fall, and happily let go of them. Otherwise, it might help to mindfully adjust ourselves to a more comfortable posture, or even do some walking meditation.

7.2.3 Mental feelings are a bit more complicated: they are what we usually call “**thoughts**.” They tend to be distorted and coloured by past experiences. We need to understand all such feelings as being *mind-made*, and coming from the past, or projected to the future. So, we bring our attention back to the present moment of focus (say, the breath). This is called “**present-moment awareness**.”

7.2.4 Neutral feeling—that is, a sensation that is neither pleasant nor painful—is a bit trickier, and generally refers to when we are unable to relate to the mental object because we have had no previous experience of it or any recall of it. A neutral feeling is not directly experienced, and can only be known in retrospect. A neutral feeling, too, should be regarded as being *impermanent*. All these are a part of feeling-based meditation.

7.3 MIND-BASED MEDITATION

In the “**contemplation of the mind**” (*cittānupassanā*) or mind-based meditation, we become aware of the mind simply as being defiled (lustful, hating, deluded) or not, whether it is troubled by any of the 5 hindrances [6.1.3.1], or whether it is concentrated or not, or whether it is freed or not. At this level, we may be aware of feelings, too. So, we often need to mindfully attend to whichever object is dominant, whether it is a feeling or a mental state.

7.4 DHARMA-BASED MEDITATION

7.4.1 The contemplation of dharmas

When we are able to naturally let go of any arisen feeling or mental state, we are able to go on to the “**contemplation of dharmas**” (*dhammānupassanā*) or reality-based meditation. This is done after the fact, that is to say, there is some level of mental focus and stillness. Emerging from that focus, we *review* that state. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta compilers have listed the following dharmas that could arise at this stage, and how they should be dealt with:

(1) **The 5 mental hindrances** [6.3.1.3]

he understands	the presence or absence of <i>a mental hindrance</i> ;
he understands	the arising of an unarisen ⁴⁹² hindrance;
he understands	the letting go of an arisen hindrance;
he understands	the non-arising of the abandoned hindrance.

(2) **The 5 aggregates** [1.3.1.6]

he understands	<i>the aggregates</i> ;
he understands	its arising;
he understands	its passing away.

(3) **The 6 sense-bases & sense-objects**⁴⁹³

he understands	<i>the sense-base and its object</i> ;
he understands	whatever fetter ⁴⁹⁴ that arises dependent on both;

⁴⁹¹ For details, see **Vedanā**, SD 17.3.

⁴⁹² Technically, this should be “the arising of a *previously* unarisen ... ” but the language is clear and brief, to reflect the Pali sense.

⁴⁹³ See **Salāyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,4+5) SD 29.5.

he understands	the arising of an unarisen fetter;
he understands	the letting go of an arisen fetter;
he understands	the non-arising of the abandoned fetter.

(4) **The 7 awakening-factors** [6.3.3.4]

he understands	the presence of the awakening-factor;
he understands	the absence of the awakening-factor;
he understands	the arising of an unarisen awakening-factor;
he understands	the perfection of an arisen awakening-factor.

(5) **The 4 noble truths** [1.8.1.2]

he understands	the noble truth that is suffering;
he understands	the noble truth that is the arising of suffering;
he understands	the noble truth that is the ending of suffering;
he understands	the noble truth that is the path leading to the ending of suffering.

7.4.2 The goals of *satipaṭṭhāna*

7.4.2.1 In practice, however, only (1) and (4) are especially significant: the 5 mental hindrances are to be overcome, the 7 awakening-factors are to be cultivated.⁴⁹⁵ This clearly shows that the purpose of right mindfulness—by means of the focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)—is the attainment of dhyana. The vital importance of **the dhyanas** is that they are the springboard to non-returning and arhathood, as stated at the close of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (M 10), thus:

Whoever, bhikkhus, were to cultivate these 4 focuses of mindfulness *in this way* for just 7 years, ... for 7 days, he may expect one of two fruits:
either **arhathood** in this very life or, if there is any trace of clinging left, **non-returning**.⁴⁹⁶
(M 10,46 etc), SD 13.3

7.4.2.2 For the meditator who is not a dhyana-attainer, the first three satipaṭṭhanas are used for the abandoning of the 5 mental hindrances in their gross forms. After that, we are ready to embark on the fourth satipaṭṭhana (the observation of dharmas or realities). In other words, once all these hindrances are abandoned, there is clear mindfulness. This is the kind of mindfulness that is expedient in the perception of impermanence, that leads to streamwinning, which we should try our best to cultivate here and now.⁴⁹⁷

7.5 LIBERATION

The Cha-ḷ-ābhijāti Sutta (A 6.57) says that whether we are born in dark or in bright circumstances (whether our karma is bad or good), we can still work for awakening in this life itself.⁴⁹⁸ That is, if we gradually renounce the world (beginning with understanding and working with out physical senses) for the purpose of spiritual development:

⁴⁹⁴ The 10 fetters (*saṃyojana*) listed here are not those in connection with sainthood (streamwinning, etc) (see Piya Tan, tr **Ānāpānasati S**, M 118,9-12 & nn @ SD 7.1), but of the Abhidhamma tradition, namely, sensual desire (*kāma-c, chanda*), repulsion (*paṭigha*), conceit (*māna*), views (*ditthi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), desire for existence (*bhava,rāga*), attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b, bata parāmasa*), envy (*issā*), avarice (*macchariya*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) (Vbh 17).

⁴⁹⁵ See Sujato's **Mūla Satipaṭṭhāna**, SD 13.4.

⁴⁹⁶ "One of two fruits ... non-returning," as at **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,22/2:314,12); **Sati'paṭṭhāna S** (M 10,46/1:62); **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70,27/1:481); **Aññatara S** (S 46.57/5:129); **Nirodha S** (S 46.76/5:133); **Dve Phalā S** (S 48.65/5:236); **Phalā S 1+2** (S 54.4+5/5:313 f); **Iddhi, pāda S** (A 5.67/3:82); **Sati Supaṭṭhita S** (A 5.122/-3:143); **Pabbajjā S** (A 10.59/5:108); **Paṭisallāna S** (It 2.2.8/39,15); **Sikkhānisamsa S** (It 2.2.9/40,12); **Jāgariyo S** (It 2.2.10/41,11); **Dvayatānupassanā S** (Sn pp140,13, 148,13).

⁴⁹⁷ However, streamwinning can also be attained *without* dhyana: see **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf **(Tamo,joti) Puggala S** (S 3.21/1:93-96), SD 18.6; abr in A 4.85/2:85 f & Pug 4.19/51 f.

While living thus as a renunciant, having abandoned the 5 hindrances, the mental impurities that weaken wisdom, his mind well established in the 4 focuses of mindfulness, having cultivated the 7 awakening-factors as they really are, he is reborn in nirvana

(A 6.57,7+10/3:386+387), SD 23.5

8 Right concentration (*sammā,samādhi*; Skt *samyak,samādhi*)

8.1 DEFINITION

8.1.1 Suttas dealing with the noble eightfold path invariably define “**right concentration**” (*sammā samādhi*) as the 4 dhyanas.⁴⁹⁹ **the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (D 22) and **the Sacca Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 141) define right concentration, thus:

And what ... is **right concentration** (*sammā,samādhi*)?

(1) Here, quite detached from sensual pleasures, detached from unwholesome mental states, a monk enters and dwells in the first dhyana, accompanied by *initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and joy, born of solitude*.⁵⁰⁰

(2) With the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquillity and oneness of mind, the monk enters and dwells in the second dhyana, free from initial application and sustained application, *accompanied by zest and joy, born of stillness*.⁵⁰¹

(3) With the fading away of zest, the monk remains equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending, and experiences joy with the body. He enters and dwells in the third dhyana, of which the noble ones declare, ‘Happily he dwells in *equanimity and mindfulness*’.⁵⁰²

(4) With the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain, and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure, he attains and dwells in **the fourth dhyana** that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with *mindfulness fully purified by equanimity*.⁵⁰³

This ... is called right concentration. (D 2,75-81; D 22,21; M 141,31; M 27,19-22)⁵⁰⁴

8.1.2 A dhyana is a profoundly blissful mental state when we are totally free (for that duration at least) from the physical body, and experience the pure mind. This is a state perfectly rid of all the 5 mental hindrances [6.3.1.3], so that the mind is spacious, calm and blissful. Emerging from such a state, the mind is laser-sharp and crystal-clear, so that we can either direct it towards supersensory powers⁵⁰⁵ or to spiritual liberation, or both.

⁴⁹⁹ See, eg, **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,21/2:313), SD 13.2; **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141,31/3:252), SD 11.11; **(Magga) Vibhaṅga S** (S 45.8,10/5:10), SD 14.5; **Samādhi Bhāvanā S** (A 4.41,2/2:45), SD 24.1; **(Ti) Sikkhā S** (A 3.88,3/1:235), SD 24.10c; cf **Mahā Suññata S** (M 122,7.2-8.4/3:111), SD 11.4.

⁵⁰⁰ *Vivicc’eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi sa,vitakkaṃ sa,vicāraṃ viveka,jaṃ pīti,sukhaṃ paṭhama-j,-jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*

⁵⁰¹ *Vitakka,vicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhataṃ sampasadānaṃ cetaso ekodi,bhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samā-dhi,jaṃ pīti,sukhaṃ dutiya-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.* In **Kolīta S** (S 21.1), the 2nd dhyana is known as “the noble silence” (*ariya,tuñhi,bhāva*) because within it initial application and sustained application (*vitakka,vicāra*) cease, and with their cessation, speech cannot occur (S 21.1,3-4/2:273 f), SD 24.12b; also in **Dutiya Jhāna S** (S 40.2/4:263 f), SD 24.12a. Cf **Kāma,bhū S** (S 41.6), where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are called verbal formation (*vacī,-saṅkhāra*), the mental factors responsible for speech (S 41.6,7/4:293), SD 48.7. In **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26), the Buddha exhorts the monks when assembled to “either speak on the Dharma or observe the noble silence” (ie, either talk Dharma or meditate) (M 26,4/1:161), SD 1.11.

⁵⁰² *Pītiyā ca virāgā ca upekkhako ca viharati sato ca sampajāno, sukhañ ca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti yan taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti, “upekkhako satimā sukha,vihārīti tatiya-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.*

⁵⁰³ *Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbe’va somanassa,domanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkham asukhaṃ upekkhā,sati,parisuddhim catuttha-j,jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.* Here, **Vibhaṅga** gives 3 factors of the 4th dhyana—equanimity (*upekkhā*), mindfulness (*sati*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cittassa ek’aggatā*)—according to the Sutta analysis (Vbh 261), and 2 factors—equanimity and one-pointedness of the mind—according to the Abhidhamma analysis (Vbh 164; Vism 4.183/165). [5.2.1+5.4]

⁵⁰⁴ **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2,75-81/1:73-75), SD 8.10; **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22,21/2:313 f) SD 13.2; **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (M 141,31/3:252), SD 11.11; **Cūḷa Hatthi,padōpama S** (M 27,19-22/1:181 f), SD 40a.5.

⁵⁰⁵ On such powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (4-6).

8.2 ETHICAL STATUS

8.2.1 Right concentration is a focused mental state associated with wholesome (*kusala*) consciousness which eventually may reach dhyana (*jhāna*). There are 2 kinds of concentration: the mundane (*lokiya*) and the supramundane (*lok'uttara*). The mundane concentration is what the peace, joy and clarity that the unawakened mind experiences in meditation.

8.2.2 The supramundane concentration is associated with the path of awakening itself, that is, the states of consciousness of the saints or noble individuals (*ariya puggala*) themselves, otherwise known as the 4 supramundane paths and their 4 respective fruitions. Technically, however, only some level of concentration (even without reaching dhyana) and some wisdom (without a full understanding of non-self) are for the attainment of streamwinning or once-returning.

However, in order to attain non-returning or arhathood, we must have overcome all lust, because lust holds us back to our physical body. To be free of our body (the 5 physical senses), we need to attain dhyana. Only a mastery of dhyana—which is a purely mental state—is able to free us from the grips of any desire for bodily pleasures, the very first of the 5 mental hindrances (that works against mental concentration) [6.3.1.3] and the 10 mental fetters (that work against the attaining of liberation) [1.6.6].

8.2.3 On the other hand, right view is *not* necessarily present in every wholesome state of consciousness. In our daily life, even when we are involved in some religious activity or our own spiritual practice, we may be making all the right moves and having the right moods, such as happily participating in a ritual of offering alms to some monastics. We rejoice in the act and follow what is rightly done by everyone else, especially our leaders.

We may not have a clue why certain things are done, or how, for example, the dedication of merit works, but we participate through the event with a happy wholesome mind—but without any right view or even the basic facts. However, there are certainly some level of wrong views, since we are not fully informed about the nature of the activities we are going through or what their real benefits are, if any.

8.2.4 For that (to know the real meanings and true merits of our religious actions and states), we need some level of wisdom, which comes from studying the suttas, learning from the wise, reflecting things for oneself and cultivating the mind. The early texts tell us of “the 3 wisdoms” (*ti,paññā*), as laid out in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33) and **the Vibhaṅga**, thus:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) wisdom through thinking or philosophical knowledge, | <i>cintā,maya paññā</i> |
| (2) wisdom through listening or academic knowledge, and | <i>suta,maya paññā</i> |
| (3) wisdom through cultivation or insight knowledge. | <i>bhavanā,maya paññā</i> |
- (D 33,1.10(43)/3:219; Vbh §753/310, §768/324)

Essentially, these are three ways in which we learn things or form ideas. Very often, the first ideas we have about someone or something is in which we think about them. However, the first two ways of learning are often switched around: we can also first learn about something from an external source, that is, by hearing about it from another, by reading about it or through the mass media.

The most personal and direct way of learning is through “cultivation,” that is, through meditation or self-realization. This is actually an “unlearning” because we are now able to let go of old and wrong views, as we now see and know true reality better. As this is a self-realization, an understanding that comes from “looking within,” it is also called “insight.” This is the understanding that liberates us from craving and ignorance, one that awakens us.

8.3 THE DHYANAS

8.3.0 The nature of the dhyanas

8.3.0.1 Right concentration (*sammā,samādhi*) is the third of the three path-factors constituting the aggregate of concentration training (*paññā,sikkhā*), the third of the 3 trainings [1.5]. It is also the last

factor or limb (*aṅga*) of the noble eightfold path, as a journey of the unawakened towards awakening, and of the partly awakened moving on to arhathood. Hence, right concentration's position at the end of the mundane path highlights its significance as the final bridge to the beginning of the supramundane path, that is, the path of awakening itself.

8.3.0.2 Synchronically (at any one time), we can see each of the 8 path-factors of the eightfold path as standing alone, but embodying all the other seven factors, with whose help it works towards the goal of right view, the underlying factor for the whole path [1.8.3.2]. In other words, at every stage of the path, we work with the factor at hand, shaping it with right view. In right concentration, for example, this means understanding the conditions for dhyana (that is, right mindfulness) [7.4.2.1] and the conditioned nature of each of the 4 dhyanas (as we shall see below).

8.3.0.3 Diachronically (over time), as we become more familiar with individual path-factors, thus improving our practice and understanding, we integrate the related path-factors more closely together for optimum effect. This is the “aggregates” (*khandha*) approach, otherwise, called the 3 trainings—those of moral virtue, of mental cultivation and of wisdom [1.5].

The 3 trainings are *sequential* in the sense that the path-factors, working optimally in sets (like teams at the same task), with moral training as the basis for mental training. Moral virtue readies the body and speech for mental cultivation, which, in turn, prepares the mind for concentration, especially dhyana. Both trainings in moral virtue and in mental concentration are the foundations for wisdom training [1.5.2 & Table].

8.3.0.4 Right concentration refers to the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*). A **dhyana** (*jhāna*) is a transcendent mental state (free from the body), thought-free, fully calm and blissful. Properly cultivated, understood and used—for seeing the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self as true reality—they expedite our journey on the path to attain non-return or arhathood itself.

8.3.1 The 1st dhyana

8.3.1.1 When all the 5 mental hindrances [6.3.1.3] have been overcome, the mind is free from having to process any physical sense-data. In simple terms, we are fully free from the body and are just pure mind, aware only of itself, completely peaceful and blissful. The mind is, at first, almost completely thought-free, except for some rudimentary self-awareness.

8.3.1.2 The stock passage describing the **1st dhyana** (*paṭhama-jjhāna*) is as follows:

Quite detached from sensual pleasures, detached from unwholesome mental states, he enters and dwells in **the first dhyana**, accompanied by initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and joy, born of solitude.⁵⁰⁶ (D 2,75.2/1:73), SD 8.10

The 1st dhyana has 5 dhyana-factors (*jhān'aṅga*): initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest (*pīti*), joy (*sukha*) and “one-pointedness of the mind.” This last factor is not directly mentioned because it is not fully fledged because of the subtle remnants of thought by way of initial application and sustained application

8.3.1.3 “Quite detached from sensual pleasures” means that psychologically, the mind is fully free from having to process any physical sense-data: simply put, the mind is free from the body and exists by itself, as it were. “Detached from unwholesome mental states” means that the mind is free, at least temporarily, from the 3 unwholesome roots—it is neither caught up in the mood swing between perceived liking and disliking, nor is it bored by their absence.

8.3.1.4 “Initial application” (*vitakka*) is when the mind directs itself fully to the mental object. “Sustained application” (*vicāra*) is the mind keeping itself fixed on the mental object. The mind does not need to seek out the object: it now *is* the object.

8.3.1.5 This mental unification is profoundly blissful: it is characterized by “zest” (*pīti*), an exuberant joyful interest (like when we are caught up playing a beautiful piece of music or doing something similar in a creatively inspired way) and by “joy” (*sukha*), a subtler level of bliss, a sort of profound mental resolution or subsidence—the mind is so settled in itself that the body is effectively in a state of suspended animation.

⁵⁰⁶ *Vivicc'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi sa, vitakkaṃ sa, vicāraṃ viveka, jaṃ pīti, sukhaṃ paṭhama-jjhānaṃ*

8.3.1.6 “Born of solitude” (*viveka,ja*) means that the mind is completely independent of the body, undefined by any external influx of sense-data nor mental projections. The mind sees only itself, and marvels, as it were, at itself.⁵⁰⁷

8.3.2 The 2nd dhyana

8.3.2.1 The suttas define the 2nd dhyana as follows:

With the stilling of initial application and sustained application, by gaining inner tranquility and oneness of mind, he enters and dwells in **the second dhyana**, free from initial application and sustained application, accompanied by zest and joy born of stillness [samadhi].

(D 2,77/1:74 f), SD 8.10

8.3.2.2 Technically, the 2nd dhyana arises with the settling away of initial application and sustained application. In other words, even the last vestiges of thinking have now stopped. There is a sense of “feeling,” that is, a direct experience, of what is going on before us: we feel only “zest and joy born of stillness” (*samādhi,ja pīti,sukha*). This is when the joyful interest and mental joy become more intense on account of the mind being fully concentrated or still, that is, in samadhi.

8.3.2.3 The mind in the 2nd dhyana is like a solid shiny sphere resting on a perfectly level surface stretching to eternity, touching the plane only at a tangent, a subtle point.⁵⁰⁸ There is not even the slightest vibration of speech or thought, since both initial application and sustained application have ceased. In fact, it is the most sublime state of inner peace so that this dhyana is also called the “noble silence” (*ariya tuṅhī*).

8.3.3 The 3rd dhyana

8.3.3.1 The suttas define the 3rd dhyana as follows:

With the fading away of zest, he dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending, and experiences joy with the body.⁵⁰⁹ He enters and dwells in **the third dhyana**, of which the noble ones declare, “Happily he dwells in equanimity and mindfulness.” (D 2,79/1:75), SD 8.10

From this definition, we can identify the following four dhyana-factors of the 3rd dhyana: equanimity (*upekhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), clear comprehension (*sampajāna*) and joy (*sukha*). Strictly speaking, the 3rd dhyana has only three dhyana-factors: equanimity, mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati,sampajāna*, as a dvandva) and joy. This smaller number reflects the interesting fact that the attaining of dhyana is a higher renunciation, with the decrease (not increase) of the number of dhyana-factors as we ascend through dhyana. The 1st dhyana has 5 factors, the 2nd dhyana 4, the 3rd 3, and the 4th 2.

8.3.3.2 The 3rd dhyana arises when zest—exuberant joyful interest—subsides in the 2nd dhyana, leaving only calm profound joy (*sukha*), so that we “happily ... dwell in equanimity and mindfulness.” Although the stock definition does not specifically mention “samadhi,” it is implicit in “equanimity,” which here means more than merely “on-looking awareness”:⁵¹⁰ it is a profoundly blissful dhyanic “on-looking mindfulness.”⁵¹¹

It should be understood here that, since no thoughts occur in dhyana,⁵¹² this is not a cognitive process, but technically, an affective awareness like being engagedly enthralled when watching a glorious sunset or the cloudy sky suddenly opening up to reveal a majestic mountain peak. We can only watch all wrapt in wonder, without any desire or need of doing anything else. It is the most self-satisfying of mental experiences.

8.3.4 The 4th dhyana

8.3.4.1 The 4th dhyana is defined in a sutta stock passage as follows:

⁵⁰⁷ For more details, see SD 8.4 (5.1).

⁵⁰⁸ For more details, see SD 8.4 (5.2).

⁵⁰⁹ “With the body” (*kāyena*) here is idiomatic, meaning “personally, for oneself.”

⁵¹⁰ On *mettā* as dynamic aspects of *brahma,vihara*, see SD 38.5 (7.1.9.3).

⁵¹¹ For more details, see SD 8.4 (5.3).

⁵¹² On thoughts not occurring in dhyana, see SD 33.1b (6.2.2).

With the abandoning of joy and abandoning of pain⁵¹³—and with the earlier disappearance of pleasure and displeasure—he attains and dwells in **the fourth dhyana** that is neither painful nor pleasant, and with mindfulness fully purified by equanimity.⁵¹⁴

(D 2,81/1:75), SD 8.10

8.3.4.2 The 4th dhyana comprises only “mindfulness fully purified by equanimity” (*upekkhā,sati,-parisuddhi*). “Equanimity” (*upekkhā*) here is an “on-looking mindfulness,” freed from all cognitive processes (any kind of engagement with the 6 senses): even thinking has fully ceased at this stage. The mind is in a purely affective mode: it “feels” (directly experiences) a profound sense of blissful joy, as far as words go.

On account of the mind’s freedom from all cognitive processes, its mindfulness is also fully heightened. Since the mind does not have to process any “external” sense-data, it is fully within itself, with nothing else to do, so to say. It is as if we have done a good full day’s work, and we are contented just to lie still in our favourite couch with a sense of total and blissful fulfillment.

8.3.4.3 Such a mind, that is “fully itself,” neither shaped by influxes from outside nor projecting formations from within, is—according to **the Ti,kaṇṇa Sutta** (A 3.58)—said to be “a mind that is concentrated, fully purified, cleansed, without blemish, freed from defilements, become pliable, workable, firm and attained to imperturbability” (*samahite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgane viḡatūpakkilese mudu,bhūte kammanīye thite āneḡja-p,patte*)⁵¹⁵—ready for the development of the powers of recollecting rebirths and the karmic cycle, and of deep insight for the destruction of defilements leading to non-returning, if not arhathood itself.

On emerging from dhyana, while the mind is still joyfully calm and clear, it is in the best possible readiness to see directly into true reality. We only know best how to do this with some helpful understanding of the Dharma as preserved in the suttas and the teachings of wise and experienced teachers.

8.3.4.4 The last path-factor—that of right concentration—is cultivated on two levels: the mundane and the supramundane. On the mundane level, that is, without attaining any stages of the path (not attaining sainthood of any kind), right concentration comprises dhyana, “the samadhi for dwelling happily here and now” (*diṡṡha,dhamma,sukha,vihārāya*), as stated in **the Samādhī Bhāvanā Sutta** (A 4.41).⁵¹⁶

Supramundane right concentration is the climax or fruition of the third of the three factors constituting the training in higher mind (*adhicitta,sikkhā*). The first two path-factors of this aggregate of mental training—right effort [6] and right mindfulness [7]—prepare us to attain right concentration.

The “higher mind” itself, of course, refers to dhyana, when the mind rises above all sense-processes and becomes pure mind, fully experiencing itself. Hence, discourses such as **the Sikkha-t,taya Suttas 1 and 2** (A 3.88 + 89)⁵¹⁷ declare that the “higher mind” itself comprises the 4 dhyanas, that is, dhyana in the service of attaining non-returning or arhathood.⁵¹⁸

8.3.5 Dhyana and rebirth in the heavens

8.3.5.1 Here, we will briefly note how dhyana can bring about heavenly rebirths and their significance. According to **the (Nānā,karaṇa) Puggala Sutta 1** (A 4.123), one who has cultivated the 1st dhyana will be reborn in a form-dhyana brahma world. A worldling [11.0.1] dhyana-attainer, after exhausting his life-span in the heavens, will, however, fall into a lower realm again, that is, a hell, the animal world or the preta realm.

⁵¹³ While in the 3rd dhyana, *physical* sensations are overcome, here mental sensations are transcended.

⁵¹⁴ *Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbe’va somanassa,domanassānam atthaṅgamā adukkham asukham upekkhā,sati,parisuddhim catuttha-j,jhānam.*

⁵¹⁵ This is actually a description of the 4th dhyana, this stock describes how this leads to the arising of each of the 3 knowledges (the recollection of past lives, the knowledge of the how beings fare according to their karma, and the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes [1.6.1.5], leading to arhathood): A 3.58/1:164 f (SD 94.5).

⁵¹⁶ **Samādhī Bhāvanā S** (A 4.41,2/2:45), SD 24.1.

⁵¹⁷ **Sikkha-t,taya S 1** (A 3.88), SD 24.10c, & **Sikkha-t,taya S 2** (A 3.89), SD 47.17.

⁵¹⁸ For more details, see SD 8.4 (5.4).

A noble saint (*ariya*), however, will move on from there to final nirvana. This Sutta passage not only refers to those who attain dhyana at death, but to anyone who has the ability to attain dhyana.⁵¹⁹ The point is that attaining dhyana is a karmic process, subject to the vagaries of worldly conditions. Only when we have attained at least streamwinning—that is, overcome ideas of identifying with our body, being caught up unhelpful ritual habits, or seeking succour and salvation outside of ourselves—will we actually *not* fall into the subhuman realms. Otherwise, there is always the likelihood of existential regress,

8.3.5.2 A similar passage is found in **the (Tika) Āneñja Sutta** (A 3.114/1:267) concerning the first three formless attainments—the bases of infinite space, of infinite consciousness and of nothingness—and rebirth therein. Any worldling, on account of their dhyana, who is reborn there, and in due course passing away from there, will fall into a lower realm again [8.3.5.1].⁵²⁰ However, there is no such regression for a noble individual (*ariya*), only a sure ascent towards awakening.

8.3.5.3 The (Nānā,kaṛaṇa) Mettā Sutta 1 (A 2.125) explains how the practice of each of the 4 divine abodes—lovingkindness, compassion, gladness and equanimity—up to the level of dhyana brings about rebirth in the form-world brahma world. However, when our life-span there ends, we will fall straight into a hell realm, the animal world or the preta realm.⁵²¹

8.4 MODERN PSYCHOLOGY AND RIGHT LIVELIHOOD

8.4.1 A psychology of the eightfold path

8.4.1.1 Now that we have completed our survey of the eightfold path, we can see that it is clearly a way of life entailing social growth, personal development, mental cultivation and spiritual liberation. In other words, the path is about health on every level of our being: the social, the personal, the mental and the spiritual. It is the most comprehensive programme for human development we can find in religious or human history.

8.4.1.2 From the start, Indian Buddhism is a mind-centred, self-healing spiritual system. The basic idea here is that we are mind and body. Body and mind mutually influence and nurture one another. The Buddha, just before his awakening, realizes that a severely weakened body cannot support a healthy mind, certainly not for one that is seeking self-liberation.

8.4.1.3 So the Bodhisattva takes some nourishing food for his physical health. After that, he goes deep into the joy of dhyana. Upon emerging from this deep meditation, he attains full awakening. Through his awakening, he realizes that we need to discipline our body and speech through moral conduct, so that our senses do not distract us from focusing mentally.

8.4.1.4 Then, he teaches us how to focus our mind by first clearing it of all the distractions that arise from the body and its senses. As the mind focuses on itself, we are taught to gradually let go of even those factors that make us *enjoy* transcendent bliss, until we reach the bliss of total equanimity itself. Letting go of even that, and any notion of an eternal essence of things, he gains full awakening and becomes the Buddha.⁵²²

8.4.2 A psychology of right mindfulness

8.4.2.1 It is relevant and beneficial for us today to speak of a **Buddhist meditation therapy**. Essentially, this self-healing begins with respecting our body and speech by keeping them healthy through understanding the 5 values [5.5.1.1]. When we are in harmony with our body (which includes speech), we are ready for meditation, especially calming ourself through the mindfulness of the breath,

⁵¹⁹ A 4.123/1:126 (SD 23.8a).

⁵²⁰ A 3.114/1:267 (SD 57.15). The Abhidhamma, however, says that on passing away from the formless realm, a worldling may be reborn in the same formless realm, in a higher formless realm, or in a sense-world with a three-rooted (non-greed, not-hate, non-delusion) rebirth consciousness. This means that they will be reborn either as an intelligent human or as a deva. Rebirth in a lower realm does not occur immediately upon falling from the formless state, but occurs later. See Bodhi (ed), *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, Kandy, 3rd ed 2007:226 f.

⁵²¹ A 2.125/1:126-128 (SD 33.9). The noble individual, after passing away from the brahma world, goes on to be reborn in the pure abodes as a non-returner: see **(Nānā,kaṛaṇa) Mettā S 2** (A 2.126/1:128), SD 33.10.

⁵²² See SD 1.1 (2.1.1) & 1.1(8) Intro.

and opening our heart to greater emotional health through lovingkindness.

As we constantly reflect at the end of our meditations on the brevity and impermanence of even these beautiful healing states, we are able to see directly into the true nature of life itself. All mental states—no matter how beautiful—must pass away. We must accept it as it is: this is true reality. Seeing and accepting this is the beginning of liberating wisdom.

8.4.2.2 The aggregate of mental cultivation (*samādhi, sikkhā*)—comprising right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration—is directly connected with what scientists and specialists define as **psychology**. In fact, this is exactly what this aggregate does: it works directly on the mind to rectify wrong thoughts and remove unwholesome states. The aggregate of mental cultivation, however, not only heals our mental and emotional wounds, but permanently liberates us from suffering by working at the very source of our problems.

9 Right knowledge (*sammā, ñāṇa*, Skt *samyag jñāna*)

9.0 RIGHT KNOWLEDGE, RIGHT FREEDOM

9.0.1 We have completed an analysis of the noble eightfold path. Now we come to the last two limbs—“right knowledge” (*sammā, ñāṇa*) and “right freedom” (*sammā, vimutti*). This is what they are called in the formula of the tenfold rightness (*sammatta*). They are more familiarly known as “**the freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom**” (*ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimuttiṃ*), such as in the Buddha’s famous statement that his own awakening is the same as that of Mahā Kassapa—in other words, the Buddha’s awakening is the same as that of any arhat, as attested in **the Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58).⁵²³

9.0.2 The phrase *ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimutti* is not a dvandva (a twin compound)—meaning a juxtaposition of two disparate elements—but a single conjunct compound that describes the same state: **arhathood**. The Commentary explains “**the freedom of mind**” (*ceto, vimutti*) as the attainment of the fruition of arhathood (*arahatta, phala, samāpatti*),⁵²⁴ and “**the freedom by wisdom**” (*paññā, vimutti*) as the wisdom of the fruition of arhathood (*arahatta, phala, paññā*) (SA 2:174). A common term for both aspects is “freed both ways” (*ubhato, bhāga vimutta*).⁵²⁵

9.0.3 In **the tenfold rightness** (*sammatta*) of the path, “the freedom of mind” or *ceto, vimutti* is “**right freedom**” (*sammā vimutti*) [9] and *paññā, vimutti* is “**right knowledge**” (*sammā ñāṇa*) [10]. Here, “freedom” refers to **the 8 attainments** (*attha, samāpatti*)—the 4 form dhyanas and the 4 formless attainments—mastered by the full-fledged arhat. Sometimes, it is defined as the liberation (often a code-word for dhyana) from the 3 unwholesome karmic roots of greed, hate and delusion—that is, he is “**mentally well-liberated**” (*suvimutta, citta*), as stated in the ninth (second last) of the arhat’s 10 “noble abidings” (*ariya, vāsa*) in **the Ariya, vāsa Sutta 1 and 2** (A 10.19+20).

The actual **awakening** is also denoted by “right knowledge” (*sammā, ñāṇa*),⁵²⁶ while “right freedom” is the resultant or attendant liberation (freedom from karma, rebirth, etc). Hence, in the Ariya, vāsa Suttas, the tenth (and last) of the arhat’s noble abidings is that lust, hate and delusion—the 3 unwholesome karmic roots—are totally uprooted, “made like a palm-tree stump ... of a nature never to arise again,” that is, one is “**well liberated by wisdom**” (*suvimutta, pañña*), attained full awakening.⁵²⁷

9.1 LEARNER AND NON-LEARNER

9.1.1 According to **the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta** (M 117,34), “**the learner on the path is endowed with 8 factors, but the arhat with 10 factors**” [1.2.2.2]. Who are **the learners** (*sekha*)? The “training” (*sikkhā*) of the path involves the following **7 kinds of saints**, namely:⁵²⁸

⁵²³ S 22.58 (SD 49.10).

⁵²⁴ Ordinarily, *ceto, vimutti* refers to the mind’s freedom from mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*): see SD 38.5 (8.3).

⁵²⁵ See eg **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15,36,2), SD 5.17.

⁵²⁶ See SD 10.16 (9+10).

⁵²⁷ **Ariya, vāsa S 1** (A 10.19/5:29), SD 43.14; **Ariya, vāsa S 2** (A 10.20/5:29-32), SD 43.15.

⁵²⁸ Also mentioned in (**Samudda**) **Uposatha S 2** (U 5.5/56), SD 59.2b = A 8.20.

	who has attained	
(1) the streamwinner-to-be	the path of streamwinning	<i>sotāpatti,magga</i>
(2) the streamwinner-become	the fruit of streamwinning	<i>sotāpatti,phala</i>
(3) the once-returned-to-be	the path of once-returning	<i>sakadāgāmī,magga</i>
(4) the once-returned-to-become	the fruit of once-returning	<i>sakadāgāmī,phala</i>
(5) the non-returned-to-be	the path of non-returning	<i>anāgāmī,magga</i>
(6) the non-returned-become	the fruit of non-returning	<i>anāgāmī,phala</i>
(7) the arhat-to-be	the path of arhathood	<i>arahatta,magga</i> [11.0.3]

9.1.2 All these saints—on account of their undergoing “training” (*sikkhā*), or still learning the ropes—are called “trainees” or “**learners**” (*sekha*). Only the full-fledged arhats—who have attained the fruit of arhathood (*arahatta,phala*)—are called “**non-learners**” or “adepts” (*asekha*). They have nothing more to learn regarding the 4 noble truths because they have fully realized them in every way, in all their 3 phases and 12 aspects [1.6.8.5]. Arhats are fully awakened just like the Buddha, only that the Buddha is “prime predecessor,”⁵²⁹ the “one who gives rise to the unarisen path,” as stated in **the Sambuddha Sutta** (S 22.58).⁵³⁰

9.1.3 Going back to the Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta quote [9.1.1]: the learners—that is, the saints short of the full-fledged arhat—have attained only the end of the noble eightfold path. They all have some level of right view, but it is not fully accomplished as to be capable of reaching full arhathood. All these learner saints have to attain “further distinction” (*upari,visesa*), that is, to work spiritually to attain higher stages of sainthood. When they attain non-returning, they have attained only two more factors, that is, right knowledge (*sammā ñāṇa*) and right freedom (*sammā vimutti*).

9.2 TYPES OF RIGHT KNOWLEDGE

9.2.1 The 19 review knowledges

9.2.1.1 Now, we can go on to ask: What is “**right knowledge**” (*sammā ñāṇa*)? Simply put, it is the fulfillment of the path-factor of right view (AA 5:71), or even more simply, it is arhathood (PmA 1:138). In the case of the fulfillment of right view, it only applies to the arhat. For all the other 7 kinds of saints [9.1.1], they will only attain to their respective levels, but still need to work for the attainment of arhathood.

9.2.1.2 According to the Commentaries, right knowledge comprises the 19 aspects of review knowledge (*ekūna,visati,bhedam paccavekkhanā,ñāṇam*, MA 1:189). Further information can be found in the Paṭisambhidā,magga Commentary (PmA 2:501) and Buddhaghosa’s **Visuddhi,magga**.⁵³¹

The Visuddhi,magga’s explanation is summarized in this table:

reviews:	the path	the fruition	defilements abandoned	defilements remaining	nirvana
streamwinner	1	2	3	4	5
once-returned	6	7	8	9	10
non-returned	11	12	13	14	15
arhat	16	17	18	19	—

Table 9.2.1 The 19 review knowledges (Vism 22.18-21)

9.2.1.3 Buddhaghosa gives this technical (Abhidhamma) explanation on how we get the total of 19 review knowledges:

⁵²⁹ See esp the parable of the hatchlings in (**Aṭṭhaka**) **Verañja S** (A 8.11), SD 96.12.

⁵³⁰ S 22.58 (SD 49.10).

⁵³¹ Vism 8.224/287, 22.19-21/676.

At the end of the fruition, his [the streamwinner's] consciousness enters the life-continuum (*bhav'aṅga*). After that, it arises as mind-door advertence, interrupting the life-continuum, to review the path. When that has ceased, seven impulses (*jāvana*) of the path reviewing arise.⁵³²

After re-entering the life-continuum, advertence, etc, it re-arises in the same way to review fruition, and so on. With the arising of these, he reviews the path, he reviews the fruition, he reviews the defilements that have been abandoned, he reviews the defilements still remaining, and he reviews nirvana. (Vism 22:19)

Thus, the streamwinner does 5 kinds of reviewing. And so does the once-returned and the non-returned, each in their turn. The arhat, however, naturally has no reviewing of remaining defilements. So, we have a total of 19 review knowledges (Vism 22.21).

9.2.1.4 Furthermore, trainees (*sekha*) [9.1.1] may or may not review the defilements abandoned and the defilements still remaining. In fact, it is on account of the absence of such reviewing that Mahānāma asks the Buddha, “I have wondered, bhante, what state is still not abandoned by me internally, on account of which at times these thoughts of *lust*, of *hate* and of *delusion* assail my mind and remain?”⁵³³ (M 14).⁵³⁴

The Commentary says that Mahānāma has long ago attained the fruit of once-returning, which only weakens lust, hate and delusion, but does not eradicate them. He has the mistaken notion that lust, hate and delusion have been eradicated by the path of once-returning. Thus, when he sees that they are still not abandoned, he asks the Buddha the cause of their arising. Even saints on the path (short of arhats) can be mistaken about which defilements are abandoned by which path. (MA 2:61)

9.3 ANOMALIES?

9.3.1 Streamwinners with the tenfold rightness?

We have already noted the Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta declaring that “the learner on the path is endowed with 8 factors, but the arhat with 10 factors” [9.1.1]. However, we have at least two occasions when a streamwinner is attributed with the 10 factors, that is, the tenfold rightness (*sammatta*), too. Are these anomalies? Both occasions are recorded in the Saṃyutta Nikāya.

9.3.2 Ānanda

9.3.2.1 The first occasion when a streamwinner is attributed the tenfold rightness is found in **the (Ānanda) Cunda Sutta** (S 47.13), which recounts how Ānanda is somewhat disturbed when he hears the news of Sāriputta's death from Cunda the novice. The Buddha then counsels Ānanda by asking him,

“What now, Ānanda, when Sāriputta attained final nirvana, did he take away your aggregate of moral virtue, or your aggregate of concentration, or your aggregate of wisdom, or your aggregate of freedom, or your aggregate of the knowledge and vision of freedom?”⁵³⁵ It should be noted that this is a rhetorical question, meaning that the death of someone we deeply respect or love does not in any way deprive us of our wisdom or attainments.

Ānanda, of course, replies *no*, but recalls what a great spiritual friend that Sāriputta has been to him. The Buddha then instructs Ānanda on how to cope with such a loss.⁵³⁶

⁵³² On the mind-door or mental process (*citta,vīthi*), see SD 19.14 (2-3); also SD 47.19 (3.2.2.3).

⁵³³ Comy says that Mahānāma had long ago attained the fruit of once-returning, which only weakens lust, hate and delusion, but does not eradicate them. He had the mistaken notion that lust, hate and delusion were eradicated by the path of once-returning. Thus, when he saw that they were not abandoned and asked the Buddha the cause of their arising. Even saints on the path (short of Arhats) can be mistaken about which defilements are abandoned by which path (MA 2:61).

⁵³⁴ M 14,2/1:91 (SD 4.7).

⁵³⁵ *Kinnu te ānanda sāriputto sīla-k,khandhaṃ vā ādāya parinibbuto, samādhi-k,khandhaṃ vā ādāya parinibbuto, pañña-k,khandhaṃ vā ādāya parinibbuto, vimutti-k,khandhaṃ vā ādāya parinibbuto, vimutti,ñāna,dassana-k,khandhaṃ vā ādāya parinibbuto'ti* (S 47.13).

⁵³⁶ S 47.13/5:162 f (SD 110.5).

9.3.2.2 This set of terms, called “the 5 dharma-aggregates” (*pañca dhamma-k,khandha*) recurs in **the Gārava Sutta** (S 6.2).⁵³⁷ When laid out in full (listing all the factors in all the aggregates), the set is almost identical to the tenfold rightness (*sammatta*). This is possibly an early term with the same sense as the tenfold rightness (*dasa sammatta*) before this latter technical term is introduced to refer specifically to the arhat, to highlight his importance.

The “5 dharma-aggregates” formula as found in the Gārava Sutta should be taken in its *non-technical* sense as simply referring to the training (*sikkhā*). The purpose of the Sutta, in fact, is to highlight the priority of the teaching, that it should be held above the teacher.⁵³⁸

9.3.2.3 In the 5 dharma-aggregate formula, we have the “aggregate of freedom” (*vimutti-k,khandha*), instead of simply “freedom” (*vimutti*). This suggests that the phrase refers to the training (*sikkhā*) whose *goal* is liberation, but not the liberation as yet.

And instead of “right freedom” (*sammā,vimutti*) (of the tenfold rightness formula), the set has, as its last aggregate, that of “the knowledge and vision of freedom” (*vimutti,ñāṇa,dassana*). The operative components in this term are “knowledge and vision” (*ñāṇa,dassana*) of “freedom” (*vimutti*). Again here, this clearly shows an understanding of the goal, and the need of attaining it, rather than the goal itself (as in the arhat’s tenfold rightness formula).

9.3.2.4 This understanding [9.3.2.3] is, in fact, supported by the Saṃyutta Commentary to the Gārava Sutta, which glosses “**freedom**” (*vimutti*) as “supramundane,” meaning that it refers to any of the stages of sainthood, and “**knowledge and vision of freedom**” (*vimutti,ñāṇa,dassana*) as being mundane review knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa,ñāṇam, taṃ lokiyam eva, SA 3:223*). We can surmise, then, that *vimutti* here is a broad term for the “freedom” that is sainthood, and which encompasses streamwinning, besides the other levels of awakening, over mundane realization.

9.3.2.5 The two terms—the 5 dharma-aggregates and the tenfold rightness—may have been synonyms at some point in an earlier period,⁵³⁹ but it is more likely that here it is a broad term for any of the stages of trainees’ sainthood. **Vimutti**, after all, can apply to any stage of sainthood to denote a breaking of mental fetters (*saṃyojana*) [1.6.6], liberating the saint from any rebirth in the subhuman states, as in the case of the streamwinner.

9.3.2.6 Note also the usage of the “aggregates” (*khandha*) in the set clearly refers to “**training**” (*sikkhā*),⁵⁴⁰ but, regarding the the path-factors, they are laid out in full in the “normal” sequence in the tenfold rightness formula for the adept or “non-trainee” (*asekha*), the arhat. We can, then, without difficulty, surmise that the 5 dharma-aggregates are a set that is a *generic* term for any of the 7 levels of sainthood, that is, those of the “trainees” (*sekha*) [9.1.1].

9.3.2.7 The “dharma aggregate” set recurs in **the (Pañcaka) Asekha Sutta** (A 5.108), where it is a technical term referring to the qualities of a non-learner or adept, the arhat.⁵⁴¹ This set similarly recurs in a number of other suttas and **the Paṭisambhidā,magga**.⁵⁴² On account of its more frequent usage as a technical term, this usage of “dharma aggregate” is clearly later than its usage in **the Gārava Sutta** [9.3.2.2] and **the (Ānanda) Cunda Sutta** [9.3.2.1].⁵⁴³

It is possible that the dharma aggregate formula may be an early formula for the path—with a broad application of “freedom” (*vimutti*), that is, in a non-technical sense—which is later replaced by the better known and more technical *sammatta* formula, which specifically refers to the arhat. Words describing spiritual states tend to be less technical in early Buddhist usage, especially in the first period of the Buddha’s ministry [9.3.2.4]. Their technicality evolved with more frequent usage in more specific senses.

9.3.3 Anātha,pindika

9.3.3.1 The second occasion when the tenfold rightness seems to be attributed to a streamwinner is when the elder Sāriputta counsels the ailing Anātha,piṇḍika who is in pain, in **the Anātha,piṇḍika**

⁵³⁷ S 6.2 + SD 12.3 (3).

⁵³⁸ See SD 12.3 (3.3.1). See also **The teacher of the teaching?** SD 3.14.

⁵³⁹ On the “two periods” in the Buddha’s ministry, see SD 1.1 (2.2) + SD 40a.1 (1.3).

⁵⁴⁰ On the dharma-aggregates as training, see SD 12.3 (3.1).

⁵⁴¹ A 5.108/3:134.

⁵⁴² See SD 12.3 (3.3).

⁵⁴³ For other examples of this non-technical usage referring to the trainee, see SD 12.3 (3.2.3).

Sutta 1 (S 55.26). After reminding Anātha,piṇḍika of the streamwinner’s qualities that he possesses, Sāriputta further reassures him that he is not on the wrong path, so that he will not be reborn in any suffering state.

On the contrary, Sāriputta reassures Anātha,piṇḍika, “But, you have right view ... right intention ... right speech ... right action ... right livelihood ... right effort ... right mindfulness ... right concentration ... right knowledge ... right freedom. As you consider that right freedom within yourself, your pains [feelings] may at once subside.”⁵⁴⁴

9.3.3.2 Here, the application of the formula which usually refers to an arhat, to Anātha,piṇḍika seems to be an anomaly. The issue here is that of time when the terms are used, rather than of the terms themselves. There is no good reason to assume that such terms are *fixed*, that is, technical terms from the start, as we have noted [9.3.2.4].

In other words, the 10 factors mentioned by Sāriputta to Anātha,piṇḍika are not those of a non-trainee or adept (*asekha*) (that is, an arhat), but those of a trainee (*sekha*). Our first task in such an apparently tricky passage is to simply take the Pali for what it reads—Occam’s razor cuts best here.⁵⁴⁵ In other words, it is possible that, in this case, the 10-factor set has a broader sense referring to the respective freedom (*vimutti*) of any of the trainees (*sekha*): in this case, a streamwinner. It helps to remember that early Buddhist usages of terms are less technical than their later forms and later terms.⁵⁴⁶

10 Right freedom (*sammā, vimutti*; Skt *samyag vimukti*)

10.1 DEFINITIONS

10.1.1 “Freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom”

10.1.1.1 When reading the early suttas, it is not helpful to read the key words only as technical terms. Instead, we should be diligent in carefully examining the context of the sutta, and so tease out the meanings or purposes of the key words. We have earlier [9.0.3] noted that “**right knowledge**” is by itself known as “freedom by wisdom” (*paññā, vimutti*), and that “**right freedom**” is by itself known as “freedom of mind” (*ceto, vimutti*). And they go together as the conjunct compound, *ceto, vimutti, paññā, vimutti*, that is, “the freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom.”

10.1.1.2 The fact that the phrase, “**freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom**” has no intervening “and” between the two phrases significantly shows that they go together, and are simply the two sides of the same awakening. In the scheme of the tenfold rightness, they are respectively called “right freedom” (*sammā, vimutti*) and “right knowledge” (*sammā, ñāṇa*).

Interestingly, in the tenfold rightness, the two last knowledges are listed in reverse, that is, “right knowledge” and finally “right freedom.” Right knowledge is also the arhat’s “review knowledge” [10.1.3], while right freedom is the resultant or attendant liberation of awakening itself [9.0.3]. Freedom is listed last clearly because, logically, it is the end result of the whole process.

By the same logic, we may surmise that the tenfold rightness is probably a later formula than the conjunct compound, “freedom of mind, freedom by wisdom” (*ceto, vimutti, paññā, vimutti*), which is probably an old formula to denote awakening before the eightfold path and this twin state are combined into a single formula—the tenfold rightness.⁵⁴⁷

10.1.2 “Right freedom” (*sammā, vimutti*) is the 10th and last factor or limb (*aṅga*) of the noble eightfold path, the end of the whole spiritual journey. Hence, it is defined by **the Aṅguttara Commentary** simply as “the accomplishing of freedom that is fruition of arhathood” (*arahatta, phala, vimuttiyā*

⁵⁴⁴ *Yathā, rūpena kho gaha, pati ... sammā, ditthi ... sammā, saṅkappo ... sammā, vācā ... sammā, kammantā ... sammā, ājīvo ... sammā, vāyāmo ... sammā, sati ... sammā, sama ... sammā, ñāṇaṃ ... sammā, vimutti ... tañ ca pana te sammā, vimuttino attani samanupassato thānaso vedanā paṭippassambheyyun ’ti* (S 55.26/5:382-385), SD 23.2a.

⁵⁴⁵ On Occam’s razor, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5).

⁵⁴⁶ See SD 12.3 (3.4.3).

⁵⁴⁷ We can see a similar switch in the sequence of the 4 noble truths. The better known “teaching formula” lists the truths as 1-2-3-4, while in the older “practice formula,” it is listed as 1-2-4-3. See **Mahā Saḷ-āyataniya S** (M 149,11 etc) + SD 41.9 (2.4).

samannāgato, AA 3:182) and also in **the Paṭisambhidā, magga Commentary** (PmA 1:138), that is, the attainment of the full fruition of right view and all the other path-factors (AA 2:382).

10.1.3 The Saṃyutta Commentary notes that while “right knowledge” (*sammā,ñāṇa*) is the “right review” of the freedom, “right freedom” (*sammā,vimutti*) is the actual possessing of the fruit that is the freedom and escape (from suffering)⁵⁴⁸ (SA 2:251). The arhat, in other words, reviews his situation and is now certain that he has attained the freedom that is awakening, after the fact.

10.1.4 The Vimāna, vatthu Commentary says that “right freedom” means the abandoning of all defilements (*sabba,samkilesa-p,pahāyīnaṃ*, VvA 39).

10.2 THE ADEPT’S RIGHT FREEDOM

10.2.1 The “right freedom” referring to the arhat’s awakening is more specifically called “the adept’s right freedom” (*asekhā sammā,vimutti*) in **the Asekhā Suttas 1+2** (A 10.111+112),⁵⁴⁹ **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33)⁵⁵⁰ and **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34).⁵⁵¹ thus:

What are the ten states to be realized?	<i>Katame dasa dhammā sacchikatabbā</i> ⁵⁵²
The 10 qualities of the non-learner [adept]:	<i>Dasa asekhā dhammā:</i>
(1) The non-learner’s right view,	<i>Asekhā sammā diṭṭhi</i>
(2) The non-learner’s right intention,	<i>Asekhā sammā saṅkappo</i>
(3) The non-learner’s right speech,	<i>Asekhā sammā vācā</i>
(4) The non-learner’s right action,	<i>Asekhā sammā kammantā</i>
(5) The non-learner’s right livelihood,	<i>Asekhā sammā ājīvo</i>
(6) The non-learner’s right effort,	<i>Asekhā sammā vāyāma</i>
(7) The non-learner’s right mindfulness,	<i>Asekhā sammā sati</i>
(8) The non-learner’s right concentration,	<i>Asekhā sammā samādhi</i>
(9) The non-learner’s right knowledge,	<i>Asekhā sammā ñāṇaṃ</i>
(10) The non-learner’s right freedom.	<i>Asekhā sammā vimutti</i> [1.2.2.2]

10.2.2 The Saṅgīti Sutta (D 33) and **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34) record Sāriputta’s efforts at systematizing the Buddha’s teachings, an effort that was clearly done very late in the Buddha’s ministry, that is, during the second period [1.3.4.1]. Sāriputta here sees that need of adding the prefix “non-learner” (*asekha*) to make sure that we understand that he is referring to the arhat.

Conversely, we can surmise that the list of tenfold rightness (*sammatta*), can, in the proper context, refer to the qualities of any of the 7 kinds of saints [11.5], as we have noted, in the case of Ānanda [9.3.2] and Anātha,piṇḍika [9.3.3]. When reading the early suttas, it is not helpful to read the key words only as technical terms. Instead, we should be diligent in carefully examining the context of the sutta, and so tease out the meanings or purposes of key words.

11-14 THE NOBLE INDIVIDUALS

11.0 WORLDLINGS AND SAINTS

11.0.1 Any one who has not yet attained the noble eightfold path—that is, who has not yet at least broken the “3 fetters”⁵⁵³ [11.3.1.3]—is known as a “worldling” or “ordinary person” (*puthujjana*), a member of the unawakened crowd. Such people are seen as, so to speak, “mad” or “deranged” (VA

⁵⁴⁸ *Sammā,ñāṇino*’ti sammā,paccavekkhaṇā. *Sammā,vimuttino*’ti niyyānikāya phala,vimuttiyā samannāgatā’ti (SA 2:151).

⁵⁴⁹ A 10.111+112/5:222.

⁵⁵⁰ D 33,3.3(6)/3:271.

⁵⁵¹ D 34,2.3(10)/3:292.

⁵⁵² This line only in **Das’uttara S** (D 34,2.3(10)).

⁵⁵³ Pug 12; Vism 22.5.

186), burning with the fires of greed, hate and delusion. As long as we have not overcome the 3 fetters, we are somehow infected by the madness of greed, hate or delusion, at some point or other, with brief interludes when we are not caught up with any thought.⁵⁵⁴

Although we may not often or publicly express our inherent madness, and move around society as cultured and urbane people, our latent tendencies of lust, repulsion and ignorance, silently lurk in our unconscious, ever reaching out to us like tentacles in the gloom, insidiously sapping away our goodness and energy, or pouncing right before us in violent and deadly form. Even then, we simply lick our wounds and rationalize that they are not real.

11.0.2 We are only deluding ourselves, blinded by the darkness of ignorance, seeing only the blazing fires of craving to which we are drawn. And so our lives keep going in familiar cycles of blindness and burning, with moments of seeming respite in between.

11.0.3 The noble individuals (*ariya, puggala*) or saints of the noble eightfold path, on the other hand, have at least overcome the psychological fetters of self-identity view, of doubt and of attachment to rituals and vows. They are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) the streamwinner, | <i>sotāpanna</i> |
| (2) the once-returner, | <i>sakadāgāmī</i> |
| (3) the non-returner, | <i>anāgāmī</i> |
| (4) the arhat. | <i>arahata</i> |

The 4 noble individuals are defined in such texts as **the Mahāli Sutta** (D 6).⁵⁵⁵ [9.1.1]

11.0.4 Thus, they appear as good as they really are, whether we see it or not. These saints have spiritually tamed themselves by progressively weakening and removing the unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion. Since they are truly liberated individuals—the arhats, the non-returns, the once-returns and the streamwinners⁵⁵⁶—we take them as our refuge—our guide and ideal—because through them, we are able to better see and know the Dharma, which makes noble saints of us, dousing the fires of craving, and awakening us from the sleep of ignorance.

11 The streamwinner

11.1 PERICOPES (STOCK PASSAGES)

11.1.0 Basic definition

11.1.0.1 The streamwinner (*sotāpanna*) is the first of the 4 kinds of saints on the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭh'āṅgika magga*) of awakening. The simplest definition of a streamwinner is given in **the (Indriya) Sotāpanna Sutta** (S 48.26):

SD 10.16(11.1)

(Indriya) Sotāpanna Sutta

The (Faculty) Discourse on the Streamwinner | S 48.26/5:205

Traditional: S 5.4.4.2 Saṃyutta Nikāya 5, Mahā Vagga 4, Indriya Saṃyutta 4, Sukh'indriya Vagga 2

Theme: A streamwinner is one who fully understands the 6 senses

1 Bhikshus, there are these 6 faculties. What are the six?

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| (1) The eye faculty. | <i>cakkhu'ndriya</i> |
| (2) The ear faculty. | <i>sot'indriya</i> |

⁵⁵⁴ See **Āditta (Pariyāya) S** (S 35.28), SD 1.3.

⁵⁵⁵ D 6,13 (SD 53.4).

⁵⁵⁶ They are mentioned, eg, in **Cūḷa Gopālaka S** (M 34,6-9), SD 61.3.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| (3) The nose faculty. | <i>ghān'indriya</i> |
| (4) The tongue faculty. | <i>jivh'indriya</i> |
| (5) The body faculty. | <i>kāy'indriya</i> |
| (6) The mind faculty. | <i>man'indriya</i> |

2 Bhikshus, when a noble disciple understands, as they really are, the arising, the passing away, the gratification, the danger and the escape regarding these 6 sense-faculties,⁵⁵⁷

then, he is called a noble disciple who is a **streamwinner**,
no longer bound for the lower world,⁵⁵⁸ sure of going over to self-awakening.⁵⁵⁹

— evaṃ —

11.1.0.2 According to this Sutta definition, a **streamwinner** is one who has fully understood what the 6 sense-faculties (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) are, how they *arise* and *pass away*, how they are *gratified*, the *danger* that they pose, and how to *escape* their grasp. The topic of the 6 sense-faculties is fully analysed in **the Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 137).⁵⁶⁰

11.1.0.3 The definition given here by **the (Indriya) Sotāpanna Sutta** is only a general one connected with the characteristics (*lakkhaṇa*) of impermanence and suffering. The faculties comprise the “internal” sense-bases (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind), their respective “external” sense-objects, and their respective sense-consciousnesses.

The 6 faculties **arise** from our being given birth and life,⁵⁶¹ and being fed the 4 kinds of food: edible food, sense-contact, mental volition (karma) and consciousness.⁵⁶² They **pass away** when they are deprived of these *foods*.

Dependent on a sense-base (eg, the eye) and its sense-object (eg, form), sense-consciousness arises. When the three meet, there is contact (sense-stimulus), on account of which there is feeling based on that sense. When we feel, we perceive (recognize by relating to some present views we hold or to some past experiences we recall).⁵⁶³ This is their **gratification**.

From this, there is a proliferation of thoughts and desires.⁵⁶⁴ This is the **danger** of the philosophical fetter that chains and chokes us with thoughts and views, without bettering our lives in any way. Bodily pain is still pain no matter how we philosophical we are about it. However, it helps to understand every one of the faculties and their respective sense-objects as arising from conditions; hence, they are *impermanent*. When we constantly perceive them as being impermanent, we will find the **escape** from them.⁵⁶⁵

11.1.0.4 This definition is probably unique to this Sutta. The better known definition of a streamwinner is that of the “4-limb” pericope [11.1.1].

11.1.1 The “4-limb” streamwinner pericope

11.1.1.1 The Pañca Vera Bhaya Sutta 1 (S 12.41) gives this comprehensive description of a streamwinner:

⁵⁵⁷ *Yato kho bhikkhu ariya, sāvako imesaṃ channaṃ indriyānaṃ samudayaṃ ca atthaṅgamaṇṇ ca assādaṇṇ ca ādīnavaṇṇ ca nissaraṇaṇṇ ca yathā, bhūtaṃ pajānāti.* The underscored is the *samudaya* (*assāda*) pericope: **Brahma, jāla S** (D 1, 1.36+1.51+1.59 feelings), SD 25.2; **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15, 34 the 7 stations of consciousness and 2 spheres), SD 5.17; **Cūḷa, Siha, nāda S** (M 11, 8 2 views), SD 49.2; **Mahā, Puṇṇama S** (M 109, 12 the 5 aggregates), SD 17.11; **(Dhātu) Samaṇa Brāhmaṇa S 1** (S 14.37 the 4 elements), SD 29.12; **(Catukka) Yoga S** (A 4.10 sensual lust), SD 105.1; Pm 2:4 (the 5 senses). On “the arising (*samudaya*), the gratification (*assāda*), the danger (*ādīnava*) and the escape (*nissaraṇa*),” see SD 29.12 Intro.

⁵⁵⁸ *Avinipāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”: see (1.6.3.5 n).

⁵⁵⁹ *Avinipāta, dhammo niyato sambodhi, parāyano ’ti.* The last 2 components can also be rendered as “fixed in destiny, going over to self-awakening.”

⁵⁶⁰ M 137/3:216-222 (SD 29.5).

⁵⁶¹ See **Digha, nakha S** (M 74, 9), SD 16.1.

⁵⁶² SD 20.6 (2.2).

⁵⁶³ See **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18, 16), SD 6.14.

⁵⁶⁴ See **Madhu, piṇḍika S** (M 18, 17), SD 6.14.

⁵⁶⁵ See **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

“Houselord, when a noble disciple’s 5 kinds of hate and fear [11.1.1.2] have been quelled, one is endowed with the 4 limbs of a streamwinner (*sotāpannassa aṅgāni*) [11.1.1.3], and has clearly seen, and thoroughly penetrated with wisdom, the noble way —if one wishes one could by oneself declare of oneself,

‘I have destroyed hell, the animal birth, the realm of the departed [ghosts], the plane of misery, the bad destination, the lower realm. I’m a streamwinner, no longer bound for the lower world,⁵⁶⁶ sure of going over to self-awakening!’ ... ” (S 12.41,3) SD 3.3

11.1.1.2 This is the “4-limb” streamwinner pericope, the fullest definition of a streamwinner given in the suttas. The last paragraph (the whole quote) is the “full or ‘destroyed hell’ streamwinner pericope.” The “shorter streamwinner pericope” is shown below [11.1.1.3].

The simplest definition of a streamwinner is given in **the (Indriya) Sotāpanna Sutta** (S 48.25), SD 10.16(11.4); see below.

11.1.2 The streamwinner’s moral virtue

11.1.2.1 The Pañca Vera Bhaya Sutta 1 (S 12.41) explains that when we break any of the 5 precepts [1.2.1.5 (1)]—which are expressions of natural morality [5.4.1.7]—we are conditioned by that bad karma (such as *the harming of life*), and this invariably generates hate and fear in this life and also in the next life, and we feel mental pain and unease, too.

11.1.2.2 When we abstain from harming life, from taking the not-given, from sexual misconduct, from lying, and from taking intoxicants, hate and fear are quelled. We neither generate hate or fear in this life nor in the next life—and we do not feel mental pain and unease. On account of having quelled these 5 kinds of *hate and fear*, we will be endowed with the 4 limbs of a streamwinner.⁵⁶⁷ [11.2.1]

11.1.3 The shorter or “foothold” streamwinner pericope

11.1.3.1 In the Nakula Sutta (A 6.16), the houselady Nakula,mātā (Nakula’s mother) speaks of streamwinning in these terms to her ailing husband Nakula,pitā (Nakula’s father), thus:

Houselord, for as long as there are the the Blessed One’s white-clad female lay disciples who shall find a firm footing, a foothold and solace in this teaching and discipline, cross over doubt, go beyond uncertainty, win spiritual confidence, who, independent of others,⁵⁶⁸ dwell in the Teacher’s teaching, the houselady Nakula,mātā is one amongst them.

(A 6.16,2.6+4.4), SD 5.2

11.1.3.2 This “shorter or ‘footfold’ streamwinner pericope” highlights streamwinner’s faith and emotional independence. Here, “**independent of others**” means “herein, without relying on others, without belief in others, but only by his own self-verified knowledge.”⁵⁶⁹ More broadly, this phrase includes the sense of the full inner joy of the streamwinner (and of the other saints) that is inherent, without relying on others or any external agency, an unconditioned joy, being unconditionally joyful.

11.2 CONDITIONS FOR STREAMWINNING

11.2.1 The 4 limbs of a streamwinner (*sotāpannassa aṅgāni*), given in **the Pañca Vera Bhaya Sutta 1** (S 12.41), comprises the following 4 qualities:

- (1) wise faith in the Buddha;
- (2) wise faith in the Dharma;
- (3) wise faith in the sangha;
- (4) possessed of moral virtues that are dear to the noble ones. unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration. (S 12.41)⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁶ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”: see (1.6.3.5 n).

⁵⁶⁷ S 12.41,3 (SD 3.3(4.2)).

⁵⁶⁸ “Independent of others,” see DEB: apara-p, paccaya,

⁵⁶⁹ *Na para-p, paccayena, aññassa apattiyāyivā atta, paccakkha, ñāṇam ev’assa ettha hotīti* (SA 2:33; cf AA 3:350; ItA 1:112).

⁵⁷⁰ S 12.41,10-14 (SD 3.3).

In short, a streamwinner has wise faith (*avecca-p,pasāda*)⁵⁷¹ in:

- (1) the ideal of human awakening, that is, the Buddha;
- (2) the path of personal development and spiritual awakening, that is, the Dharma;
- (3) the noble individuals who are progressing on the path or who have reached the goal; and
- (4) being morally virtuous in every way (he respects the basic values of being)⁵⁷² [5.5.1.1].

11.2.2 The 4 limbs for streamwinning. When we have difficulty keeping the precepts for the sake of moral virtue, it greatly helps to cultivate the 4 “limbs for streamwinning” (*sotāpatti-y-aṅga*), that is:

- (1) association with true individuals (wise Dharma-hearted persons);
- (2) hearing the Dharma (that is, the teaching of the historical Buddha);
- (3) wise attention (reflecting on the true nature of things, especially their impermanence), and
- (4) practice of the Dharma in accordance with the Dharma (following sutta and sutta-based teachings).⁵⁷³

11.3 THE 3 FETTERS

11.3.1 Sequence

11.3.1.1 The streamwinner is defined in the suttas as one, monastic or lay, who has broken the “3 fetters”—those of

(1) self-identity view,	<i>sakkāya,diṭṭhi</i>
(2) doubt, and	<i>vicikicchā</i>
(3) attachment to rituals and vows,	<i>sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa</i>

as given in the following texts:

Saṅgīti Sutta	D 33,1.10(19)/3:216	
Sabbāsava Sutta	M 2,11.2/1:9	SD 30.3
Sarada Sutta	A 3.92b/1:241	SD 70.14
Dhamma,saṅgaṇī	Dhs 182-184, 220 f, 248	(11 references)
Vibhaṅga	Vbh 364	
Kathā,vatthu	Kvu 109	

The 3 fetters have been discussed in some detail in the essay, **Emotional independence** (SD 40a.8). It is helpful to study this essay for a fuller understanding of the 3 fetters and streamwinning.

11.3.1.2 In rare cases, “doubt” and “attachment to rituals and vows” are switched around. **The Puggala Paññatti Commentary**, for example, gives the 3 fetters as (1) the fetter of view (*diṭṭhi,sam-yojana*); (2) the fetter of attachment to rituals and vows (*sīla-b,bata,parāmāsa,sam-yojana*) and (3) the fetter of doubt (*vicikicchā,sam-yojana*) (PugA 183).

11.3.1.3 The Puggala Paññatti simply defines a streamwinner as one who has broken the “3 fetters,” without listing them, but describes a full list of saints in some detail.⁵⁷⁴ It does, however, note that those who have *not* broken these 3 fetters are said to be “worldlings” (*puthujjana*) (Pug 12) [11.0.1].

11.3.1.4 The Majjhima Commentary says that the self-identity view and clinging to rituals and vows, both included in the influx of views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), are influxes (*āsava*) [1.6.1.5] as well as fetters (*sam-yojana*) [1.6.6], while doubt is classified only as a fetter, not an influx. However, because it is in-

⁵⁷¹ On “wise faith” (*avecca-p,pasāda*), see **Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1** (S 12.41,11 n), SD 3.3(4.2).

⁵⁷² See **Sa,upādi,sesa S** (A 9.12, 8-10), SD 3.3(3); **(Tad-ah’) Uposatha S** (A 3.70,4-7), SD 4.18; **Pañca Vera Bhaya S 1** (S 12.41,10-14), SD 3.3(4.2).

⁵⁷³ See **(Sotāpatti) Phala S** (S 55.55; A 5.246); **(Mahānāma) Gilāna S** (S 55.54,5), SD 4.10, called the 4 assurances. Also called “noble growth”(*ariya,vuḍḍhi*) or qualities of growth” (*vuḍḍhi,dhamma*). See also DEB: assāsaniyā dhammā.

⁵⁷⁴ Pug 14-18.

cluded (in **the Sabb'āsava Sutta**, M 2,11.2) among the “influxes to be abandoned by seeing,” it may be spoken of as an influx (MA 1:73).⁵⁷⁵

11.3.1.5 The Dhamma,saṅgaṇī says that both *sakkāya, diṭṭhi* and *sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa* are cases of **wrong view** that is only associated with the mind of greed (*lobha*), and that these two fetters are particular manifestations of that greed (Dhs 75-80, 182 f). *Vicikicchā* is doubt regarding the 3 jewels, the training, the past, the future, the past and the future, and regarding specific conditionality and dependent arising (Dhs 183).

Clearly then, *vicikicchā* is defined as just the opposite to the terms *saddhā* and *pasāda*. While *saddhā* is full faith in the 3 jewels, *pasāda* is an embracing faith in all things good and wholesome. We will now examine these two terms more closely.

11.3.2 Saddhā and pasāda

11.3.2.1 There are at least two important words for “**faith**” specifically connected with the stream-winner (*sot'āpatti*) and believers in general: *saddhā* and *pasāda*. *Saddhā* is what we usually understand to be “faith” in the religious or affective (feeling or emotional) sense of ‘gaining confidence’ (*saddahati*) in, say, the Buddha or his awakening, after listening to the Dharma.⁵⁷⁶ In fact, in the suttas, we see this as the most common usage, that is, explicitly applied to the Buddha or his awakening.

11.3.2.2 Pasāda, on the other hand, although essentially having the same sense as “faith,” has significant nuances that we should be aware of. It is one of those vitally polysemic Pali words many, if not all, of whose senses may apply simultaneously.⁵⁷⁷ Hence, such words pose a great challenge to translators and a stumbling block for those of us fixed on the short-sightedly naive idea that a word must have only one sense.⁵⁷⁸

The word *pasāda*, notes Gethin, “conveys at the same time notions of a state of mental composure, serenity, clarity or purity and trust.”⁵⁷⁹ *Pasāda* thus has a broader affective compass than *saddhā*. The suttas speak of a monk—or we may say of ourself—feeling imbued and brightened with faith not only in the Buddha, the Teacher (*sathari pasādati*), but also in the Dharma, his teaching, and in the sangha, the various noble individuals, singly or as the holy community.⁵⁸⁰

11.3.2.3 Furthermore, there are **4 kinds of pasāda**, “bright faith,” that are regarded as being foremost, of the highest quality and supreme goodness, as stated in **the (Catukka) Agga-p, pasāda Sutta** (A 4.34), thus:

(1) Bhikshus, as far as there are **beings**—whether legless, four-legged, many-legged, whether with form or formless, whether conscious, unconscious, or neither-conscious-non-conscious—that is to say, **the Tathagata**, worthy one, fully self-awakened, is declared to be the foremost amongst them.

Bhikshus, those who have faith in *the Buddha*, have faith in the foremost (of beings); *and those who have faith in the foremost, win the foremost fruit.*

(2) Bhikshus, as far as there are **conditioned truths**, **the noble eightfold path** is said to be the foremost of them.

Bhikshus, those who have faith in *the noble eightfold path*, ... *win the foremost fruit.*

(3) Bhikshus, as far as there are **truths**, conditioned or unconditioned, **dispassion** is said to be the foremost amongst them, that is to say, the crushing of intoxication, the removing of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the cutting off of the cycles (of lives and deaths), the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nirvana.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁵ On influxes and fetters, see SD 30.3 (1.3.3).

⁵⁷⁶ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(16)/3:237); **Sekha S** (M 51,11/1:356) SD 21.14, **Bodhi Rāja, kumāra S** (M 85,58/-2:95), SD 55.2; **(Indriya) Vibhaṅga S** (S 48.9/5:196 f), SD 74.7; **(Pañca) Padhāna S** (A 5.53/3:65), SD 51.8; see also Jayatilleke 1963:389; Conze 1962:48.

⁵⁷⁷ On the significance of Pali polysemy, see SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2).

⁵⁷⁸ It is helpful to be know how **the Humpty Dumpty rule** works here: see SD 17.4 (2.3).

⁵⁷⁹ Gethin 2001:112; see SED pra-sāda; BHSD prasāda & prasādaniya; PED pasāda.

⁵⁸⁰ Faith in the teacher, **Vimaṃsaka S** (M 47,14.2/1:320), SD 35.6, **(Tad-ah') Uposatha S** (A 3.70,4.3/1:207), SD 4.18; in the Dharma, **Uposatha S** (A 3.70,5.2/1:207) and in the sangha (A 3.70,5.5/1:209).

⁵⁸¹ *Yad idaṃ mada, nimmadano pipāsa, vinayo ālaya, samugghāto vaṭṭ'upacchedo tanhā-k, khayō virāgo nirodho nibbānaṃ.* Comy & Vism gloss *mada, nimmadana* as “the intoxication with conceit, with manhood and so

Bhikshus, those who have faith in the truth that is *dispassion*, ... win the foremost fruit.

(4) Bhikshus, as far as there are **sanghas** or groups, the sangha of the Tathagata's disciples is said to be the foremost of them, that is to say, the 4 pairs of persons, the 8 individuals

... .

Bhikshus, those who have faith in the *sangha*, ... win the foremost fruit.

(A 4.34,1-2), SD 45.13

11.3.2.4 A couple of points should be noted here. The first is that, generally, *pasāda*—as “faith”—has a broader application than *saddhā*. While *saddhā* is usually directed to the Buddha and his awakening, *pasāda* applies to the 3 jewels and key aspects of the Dharma. The second point is a reminder that of all conditioned states, the noble eightfold path is the foremost [1.1.3.1].

11.3.2.5 We have briefly noted that while *saddhā* is focused faith, *pasāda* directs itself to all that is good in the Dharma. In a sense, *saddhā* is usually person-based (*puggalādhiṭṭhāna*) while *pasāda* is usually dharma-based (*dhammādhiṭṭhāna*).⁵⁸² Usually *dhamma* in these expressions means “idea, concept,” but here we can simply take it as “teaching.” Hence, we can see that *pasāda* is subtler in application than *saddhā*.⁵⁸³

11.3.2.6 However, as a technical term, we must concede that *saddhā* is still the key term, as it is the *first* of the 7 treasures (*satta, dhana*).⁵⁸⁴ It is also the *first* of the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*) and of the 5 spiritual powers (*pañca, bala*),⁵⁸⁵ and it is the *first* of the 5 limbs of striving (*padhāniy'āṅga*).⁵⁸⁶ In the Abhidhamma, *saddhā* is said to be a mental concomitant (*cetasika*) that is present in what is karmically wholesome and its corresponding neutral consciousness.⁵⁸⁷

Saddhā, as a technical term, besides denoting its technical meanings, also connotes the senses of *pasāda* depending on the context. The best way to benefit from the suttas is to master not only the word or word-meaning (*vyañjana*), but also the sense (*attha*) that is intended. It should be noted that the polysemic *attha* itself has two important senses here; we should not only know the meaning of the word, sentence, passage or teaching, but we should also understand its purpose.

11.3.3 Avecca-p.pasāda

11.3.3.1 There is a phrase which combines the essence of both *saddhā* and *pasāda*, but specifically refers to the faith of the saints—that is, **avecca-p.pasāda** (BHS *avetya, prasāda*). The term is resolved as *avecca* + *pasāda*. We have already noted the meaning of *pasāda* [11.3.2.2+3]. So here we will only examine *avecca*, “understanding, having penetrated,” which is the absolute of *aveti*, “to understand, know.” Thus, we can translate *avecca-p.pasāda* as meaning “faith rooted in knowledge, wise faith.”⁵⁸⁸

11.3.3.2 Thus, in the Nikāyas, we see, at least implicitly, that *saddhā* and *pasāda* work together reciprocally. The first is that faith is the basis that initiates and sustains spiritual activity, and secondly, that this faith involves *mental clarity* that is often characterized as being bright. Hence, we see *pasāda* implicit in *saddhā*. This reciprocal quality is highlighted in **the Milinda, pañha**, thus:

on” (*māna, mada, purisa, mad'ādiko*, AA 2:106 = ItA 2:106 = Vism 8.247/293). BA glosses it as “all kinds of intoxications beginning with that of birth” (BA 63).

⁵⁸² On *puggalādhiṭṭhāna* and *dhammādhiṭṭhāna*, see SD 36.1 (1.11.2); SD 47.20 (1.2.3).

⁵⁸³ See Gethin's quote of Harivarman's *Satyasiddhiśāstra, 2001;113.

⁵⁸⁴ On the 7 treasures (*satta dhana*), see **Ariya, dhana S 1+2** (A 7.5+6), SD 37.6.

⁵⁸⁵ On the 5 spiritual faculties (*pañc'indriya*), see **Pañc'indriya**, SD 10.4. On the 5 powers (*pañca bala*), see **Pañca, bala**, SD 10.5.

⁵⁸⁶ The 5 limbs of striving (*padhāniy'āṅga*) are the theme of **Kaṇṇa, kaṭṭhala S** (M 90,10.2), SD 10.8. See also **Padhāniy'āṅga S** (A 5.53/3:65), SD 51.8, & **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.1(16)/3:237).

⁵⁸⁷ See BDict: *saddhā* & Table II.

⁵⁸⁸ D 2:217,19 f (in the 3 jewels), 3:227,7; M 1:37,16, 46,23, 2:51,16, 3:253,31; S 2:69,21, 4:271,34 f, 5:343,1, 345,10, 381,29, 405,1; Kvu 104,7. For opp *appasāda*, see CPD sv *avecca*.

When faith (*saddhā*) arises, sire, it averts the (mental) hindrances. A mind free of hindrances is clear, radiant, undisturbed. Even so, sire, faith has the characteristic of serenity [composure] (*sampasādāna*).⁵⁸⁹ (Miln 34 f)

11.3.3.3 The Commentaries, in their glosses on *saddhā*—here understood as a synonym for *avecca-p,pasāda*—tend to highlight commitment (*adhimokkha*) and effort (*virīya*). The faculty of faith (*saddh'indriya*) is said to execute a lord's or leader's purpose by way of commitment.⁵⁹⁰

The Visuddhi,magga and the Dhamma,saṅgaṇī Commentary (Attha,sālinī) note that the manifestation of *saddhā* is in commitment (*adhimutti,paccupaṭṭhāna*).⁵⁹¹ This emphasis on “commitment” (*adhimokkha*) seems to have arisen from **the Paṭisambhidā,magga's** treatment of “purpose” (*attha* or *aṭṭha*) that faith entails.⁵⁹²

11.3.3.4 The Dhamma,saṅgaṇī, in its gloss on the “faculty of faith” (*saddh'indriya*), gives a register of terms that suggests the same reciprocal dynamic between *saddhā* as motivating and *pasāda* as clarifying the mind: “faith, trusting, plunging into, a good disposition, faith, the faculty of faith, the power of faith” (*saddhā saddahanā okappanā abhippasādo saddhā saddh'indriyam saddhā,balam*) (Dhs 10 f).

Gethin notes that “[t]he sequence might be interpreted as indicating a process beginning with straightforward trust (*saddhanā*) which leads to making ready and mental composure (*okappanā*), followed by complete clarity of mind (*abhippasāda*) which in turn is a strengthening of *saddhā*.” (2001:114)

11.3.3.5 Faith in the suttas, then, is represented by the words *saddhā* and *pasāda*. Despite their separate subtleties, both aspects of faith have the same effect on us—that of **effort or energy** (*virīya*). Faith infuses and inspires us not only with commitment, but also with the energy to fulfill that commitment. When we have strong faith in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the sangha, energy for striving proliferates (*yassa hi buddhādisu pasādo balavā tassa padhānam viriyam ijjhati*).⁵⁹³

11.4 THE 3 KINDS OF STREAMWINNERS

11.4.0 Related suttas

11.4.0.1 The suttas and commentaries give a list of 3 types of streamwinners. **The Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** (S 9.12) defines them as follows:

- (1) “**single-seeder**” (*eka,bijī*), “having taken only one more human rebirth, (he) makes an end of suffering” (A 9.12,8);
- (2) “**clan-to-clan goer**” (*kolam,kola*), “having re-arisen and wandered amongst two or three families, (he) makes an end of suffering” (A 9.12,9);
- (3) “**seven-at-most**” (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), “having re-arisen and wandered amongst gods and humans for seven lives at the most, (he) makes an end of suffering” (A 9.12,10).

This is the most common sequence of the type of streamwinners mentioned in the suttas. **The Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** (A 9.12) and **the Puggala Paññatti** (Pug 12.38-40), however reverse the list, putting the “seven-at-most” first. The sequence of listing depends on the context. If the arhat or non-returner is mentioned first, then, the list mentions *the one-seeder streamwinner* last (in other words, in a descending order); if the arhat or non-returner is listed last (as the climax), then the list mentions *the seven-at-most streamwinner* first (in other words, in an ascending order).

11.4.0.2 The list of the 3 kinds of streamwinners can be found in the following texts:

Eka,bijī Sutta

S 48.24/5:204 f (briefly)

SD 70.16

⁵⁸⁹ *Saddhā kho mahā,rāja uppajjamānā nīvarane vikkhambeti vinīvaranam cittam hoti accham vipasannam anāilam, evam kho mahā,rāja sampasādāna,lakkhaṇa saddhā* (Miln 34 f).

⁵⁹⁰ *Adhimokkha,lakkhaṇe ind'aṭṭham karoti* (UA 305 = VbhA 125).

⁵⁹¹ Vism 14.140; DhsA 120.

⁵⁹² Pm 1:15-22, 23, 27, 34, 35, 2:118-25. See Gethin 2001:114, 308-310.

⁵⁹³ DA 3:1029 = MA 3:326 = AA 3:65.

Sikkhā Sutta 3*	A 3.87/1:233	SD 80.14
Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta	A 9.12/4:381 [11.4.0.2]	SD 3.3(3)
Niṭṭha Sutta*	A 10.63/5:119 f	SD 3.3(1.2)
Eka Puggala Paññatti*	Pug 1.37-39/16	SD 70.16
Samyutta Commentary	SA 3:238 (Comy on S 48.24)	
Anguttara Commentary	AA 2:349 (only <i>kolamkola</i> + <i>eka,bījī</i>)	
Dhamma,saṅgaṇī Commentary	DhsA 430	
Puggala Paññatti Commentary*	PugA 196	
Paṭisambhidā,magga Commentary*	PmA 2:464	
Visuddhi,magga	Vism 23.55/709	

[* An asterisk denotes a text listing *the seven-at-most streamwinner* first.]

11.4.0.3 In this brief survey of the 3 kinds of streamwinners, we follow the ascending sequence, listing the “single-seeder” first, in view of the fetters and defilements we need to progressively overcome once we attain the path of awakening.

11.4.1 The single-seeder

11.4.1.1 The first kind of streamwinner is called **the single-seeder** (*eka,bījī*). The **Sa,upādi,sesa Sutta** (A 9.12) defines a single-seeder as one who, “having taken only one more human rebirth, makes an end of suffering.”⁵⁹⁴ The “**seed**” (*bīja*) refers to his weakening of his karmic potential, so that he only needs “one more human rebirth” to remove that potential for rebirth.

11.4.1.2 His last rebirth is a human one because he lacks **dhyana**, which is the rule for streamwinners and once-returners. However, there are exceptional streamwinners (and once-returners) who are able to attain dhyana, so that it expedites their passage on the path of awakening to attain non-return, even arhathood, in this life itself.⁵⁹⁵

11.4.1.3 The conditions that weaken the streamwinner’s karmic potential are his impeccable moral virtue, a state expedited by his habitual lovingkindness,⁵⁹⁶ and which also limits the negative effects of his karma.⁵⁹⁷ Especially through the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*), he is able to attain streamwinning in this life itself, certainly at the point of dying.⁵⁹⁸

11.4.1.4 The single-seeder, in his last life, improves his spiritual faculties (*indriya*), especially his concentration (*samādhi*), so that he is able to attain **dhyana**—through which he is able to remove the last vestiges of sensual lust, the first fetter, and the remaining fetters [1.6.6-1.6.8]—and so attain arhat-hood, ending his rebirth.

Just like a once-returner [12], he attains arhathood in his following life, his last. However, unlike the once-returner—predominated by the faculties of concentration and wisdom, but weak in faith—the single-seeder’s keen insight and keen faculties⁵⁹⁹ (especially **faith**) are the source of his spiritual strength.

11.4.2 The clan-to-clan goer

11.4.2.1 The second kind of streamwinner, the **clan-to-clan goer** (*kolam,kola*), is one, “having arisen and wandered amongst two or three families—human or divine (PugA 196)—makes an end of suffering” (A 9.12,9). These are spiritually wholesome families (*kula*) that are steeped in Dharma or provide the proper conditions for his continuing development on the path of awakening.

11.4.2.2 His karmic potential is still strong, needing only a couple more lives to fully defuse his karmic potential. During those rebirths (not necessarily the full three lives) he strengthens his faculties, especially concentration, so that he is able to attain dhyana necessary for uprooting sensual lust

⁵⁹⁴ A 9.12,8 (SD 3.3(3)).

⁵⁹⁵ Visuddhacāra gives an overview of statements by several well known meditation teachers on the dispensability of dhyana for attaining streamwinning, 1996.

⁵⁹⁶ On the cultivation of lovingkindness, see **Karaṇīya Metta S** & SD 38.3 (6).

⁵⁹⁷ **Kara,ja,kāya Brahma,vihāra S** (A 10.208) @ SD 2.10 (2).

⁵⁹⁸ See (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7, or any of the other 9 suttas of the Okkanta Samyutta (S 25).

⁵⁹⁹ *Tikkhāya vipassanāya āgato tikkh’indriyo* (Vism 23.55/709).

and the remaining fetters. Buddhaghosa describes him as one of “medium insight and medium faculties” (*majjhimāya vipassanāya āgato majjhim’indriya*, Vism 23.55/109).

11.4.3 The seven-at-most

11.4.3.1 The third and last kind of streamwinner is the **seven-at-most** (*satta-k,khattu,parama*), who “having re-arisen and wandered amongst gods and humans for seven lives at the most, makes an end of suffering” (A 9.12,10). As in the case of the other two kinds of streamwinners, the seven-at-most may also be reborn amongst the gods of the sense world. Even then, these gods have life-spans which are very much longer than humans, the longest lived of whom have a life-span of 128,000 celestial years (that is, the “lord of others’ creations,” Paranimmita,vasavatti devas).⁶⁰⁰

11.4.3.2 No matter how the seven-at-most dies, he does not attain an eighth rebirth. However, on account of the relative life-spans of beings, even in the sense-world, “seven lives” is a relative term. In a sense, the seven-at-most streamwinner needs all that time to strengthen his otherwise “dull insight and mild faculties” (*mandāya vipassanāya āgato mud’indriyo’pi*, Vism 23.55/709). Even then, his spiritual insight and faculties are far more advanced than those of any worldling who are still “outsiders” (*bāhira*) to the path.⁶⁰¹

11.5 THE 7 SAINTS OF THE NOBLE PATH⁶⁰²

11.5.1 Faith and wisdom

11.5.1.1 One of the most important suttas dealing with streamwinning is **the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta** (S 25.1). It is also the locus classicus for the definition of two interesting terms—the “faith-follower” (*saddhā’nusārī*) and the “truth-follower” (*dhammānusārī*)—closely related to the streamwinner. Abridged, the Sutta sounds thus:

“Bhikshus, the eye ... the ear ... the nose ... the tongue ... the body ... the mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

THE FAITH-FOLLOWER. Bhikshus, one who has faith thus, who firmly believes these truths [is convinced of these truths], is called **a faith-follower** (*saddhā’nusārī*).⁶⁰³

He is descending into the certainty of rightness [the fixed course to rightness], descending into the plane of true individuals;⁶⁰⁴ he has gone beyond the plane of the worldlings [11.3.1.3].

He is incapable of doing any intentional deed by which he might be reborn in hell, or in the animal birth, or in the preta realm. He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.⁶⁰⁵

THE TRUTH-FOLLOWER. Bhikshus, one who accepts these truths after pondering over them with some wisdom thus, is called **a truth-follower** (*dhammānusārī*).

He is descending into the certainty of rightness ... [as for the faith-follower] He is incapable of dying without having attained the fruit of streamwinning.

THE STREAMWINNER. One who knows and sees these truths thus is called **a streamwinner**, no longer bound for the lower world,⁶⁰⁶ surely going over to self-awakening.

(S 25.1), SD 16.7

⁶⁰⁰ For early Buddhist cosmology, see table on the “31 realms” (App 3) SD 1.7 (App 3).

⁶⁰¹ On “outsiders” (*bāhira*), see **Cūḷa Hatthi, padôpama S** (M 27,25.4) n + SD 40a.5 (1.1.2); **Dakkhiṇa Vibhaṅga S** (M 142,5(11)) + nn, SD 1.9; SD 47.1 (1.1.2).

⁶⁰² This is only a brief intro into the 7 kinds of noble saints. For details, see SD 11.1 (5.2).

⁶⁰³ On the streamwinner’s faith, see **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3 (5).

⁶⁰⁴ “True individuals,” *sappurisa*, also “superior persons,” “virtuous person,” “ideal person”; often syn with “noble disciples,” *ariya,sāvaka*, but here clearly includes those, although not yet on the path, are assured of it, viz the faith-follower and the truth-follower. The qualities of the *sappurisa* are given in **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45), SD 29.6; see also **D 33,2.2(6)/3:252**, **34,1.8(7)/3:283**; **M 110,14-24/3:23 f**; **A 7.64/4:113**, **8.38/4:144**.

⁶⁰⁵ This is the Sutta’s key statement, which, after the Buddha’s time, is clearly what is referred to as a “lesser streamwinner” (*culla,sotāpanna, cullaka,sotāpanna*). See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3(6).

⁶⁰⁶ *Avinīpāta*, alt tr “not fated for birth in a suffering state”: see (1.6.3.5 n).

11.5.1.2 Both the faith-follower and the truth-follower are distinct from the streamwinner, but are clearly close to being one. Like the streamwinner, they are not reborn in any subhuman realms, and they have transcended the level of the worldling. Finally, it is said that they cannot die without realizing the fruit of streamwinning. Technically, it should be noted that these two kinds of individuals epitomize the spiritual faculties (*indriya*) of faith and wisdom, respectively (as defined by the Sutta itself).

11.5.2 The 7 individuals

11.5.2.1 The terms *saddhā'nusārī* and *dhammānusārī* occur as part of a list of 7 individuals in a number of suttas, such as this one:

SD 10.16(11.5)

(Sattaka) Puggala Sutta

The (Sevens) Discourse on the Individuals | A 7.14/4:10 f

Traditional: A 7.1.2.4 = Aṅguttara 7, Sattaka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 2, Anusaya Vagga 4

Theme: The 7 noble individuals

1 Bhikshus, these 7 persons are worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms.

What are the seven?

2 (They are:)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) the one freed both ways, | <i>ubhato,bhāga,vimutta</i> |
| (2) the wisdom-freed, | <i>paññā,vimutta</i> |
| (3) the body-witness, | <i>kāya,sakkhi</i> |
| (4) the view-attainer, | <i>diṭṭhi-p,patta</i> |
| (5) the faith-freed, | <i>saddhā,vimutta</i> |
| (6) the truth-follower, | <i>dhammānusārī</i> |
| (7) the faith-follower. | <i>saddhā'nusārī</i> |

These, bhikshus, are the 7 persons worthy of offerings, worthy of hospitality, worthy of gifts, worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms.⁶⁰⁷

— evaṃ —

11.5.2.2 These 7 individuals are explained in some detail in **the Kīṭā,giri Sutta** (M 70)⁶⁰⁸ and mentioned elsewhere.⁶⁰⁹ The “one freed both ways” and the “wisdom-freed” are both said to see by means of wisdom that the influxes are utterly destroyed (*paññāya assa disvā āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*). For both of them, there is nothing left to be done by diligence (*na appamādena karaṇīyam*).

It is interesting that this list of 7 individuals mentions neither the once-returner (*sakadāgamī*) nor the non-returner (*anāgāmī*). Perhaps, this is an ancient list (from the first period of the Buddha's ministry) [1.3.4.1] before the introduction of the two terms. It should be noted that this is a list of generic types rather than of individuals. In other words, any of these types can be applied to most of the 4 types of saints.

⁶⁰⁷ These 7 individuals are listed without comment but as an example of the Buddha's “designation of individuals” (*puggala,paññatti*) in **Sampasādaniya S** (D 28,8), SD 14.14.

⁶⁰⁸ M 70,14-21/1:477-479 (SD 11.1).

⁶⁰⁹ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,2.3(11)/3:254); **Sampasādaniya S** (D 28,8/3:105), SD 14.14; **Bhaddāli S** (M 65,11-12/-1:439 f), SD 56.2; **Saviṭṭha S** (A 3.21/1:118-120), SD 80.21; (**Sattaka**) **Puggalā S** (A 7.14/4:10 f), SD 10.16 (11.5).

11.5.2.3 The one freed both ways is defined in the **Kiṭṭāgiri Sutta** as follows:

Here, bhikshus, a certain person, having touched the liberations⁶¹⁰ with the body,⁶¹¹ dwells in those liberations that are peaceful and formless, transcending forms—and his mental influxes are utterly destroyed through his having seen them with **wisdom**. (M 70,15), SD 11.1 (5.2)

The arhat freed both ways is an adept who has attained the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*), and is able to attain both the form and the formless dhyanas, and also the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling.⁶¹² The arhat is *freed-both-ways* through attaining the formless spheres, whereby he is freed from the body (*kāya*), and through attaining the path of arhathood (*agga,magga*, “the foremost path”) he is freed from the mind (*nāma*).⁶¹³ [1.4.3]

11.5.2.4 The Samaṇa-m-acala Sutta 1 (A 4.87) calls the arhat freed both ways, “the red lotus recluse,” and describes him thus:

And how, monks, is a person **a red lotus recluse** (*samaṇa,paduma*)?

Here, bhikshus, a monk, right here and now, having realized for himself through direct knowledge, after attaining it, dwells in the influx-free freedom of mind and freedom through wisdom,⁶¹⁴ that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes.

And he dwells touching the 8 liberations with the body.

In this way, bhikshus, is a person a red lotus recluse. (A 4.87,4), SD 20.13

Although the wisdom-free arhat is called a “recluse” (*samaṇa*), it is simply a generic term for an arhat who may be monastic or lay.

11.5.2.5 The wisdom-freed arhat is just as spiritually liberated as the one freed both ways.

Although the wisdom-freed arhat understands the nature of the various realms, he only attains the form dhyanas, and using the calm and clarity that the dhyana provides, he directs his attention to see true reality with right view. He does not go on to cultivate the 4 formless attainments. Hence, he has not attained the higher levels of the 8 liberations (beyond the form dhyanas)⁶¹⁵ [11.5.2.2].

11.5.2.6 The Samaṇa-m-acala Sutta 1 (A 4.87) calls the wisdom-freed arhat, “the white lotus recluse,” and describes him thus:

And how, monks, is a person **a white lotus recluse** (*samaṇa,puṇḍarīka*)?

Here, bhikshus, a monk, right here and now having realized it for himself through direct knowledge, attains and dwells in the freedom of mind and the freedom by wisdom that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes. Yet he does not dwell experiencing the 8 liberations⁶¹⁶ with his body.

In this way, bhikshus, is a person a white lotus recluse. (A 4.87,3), SD 20.13

11.5.2.7 Both the arhats freed-both-ways and the one wisdom-freed have the same kind of liberating wisdom, that is, the understanding of the 4 noble truths. For both, too, the defilements are fully up-

⁶¹⁰ “Liberations” (*vimokkhā*, vl *vimokkhā*) refer to **the 8 liberations** (*aṭṭha vimokkhā*), which briefly are: (1) dhyana via internal (body-based) kasiṇa practice; (2) dhyana via external kasiṇa practice; (3) dhyana via colour kasiṇa or the divine abodes; (4) the sphere of infinite space; (5) the sphere of infinite consciousness; (6) the sphere of nothingness; (7) the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; and (8) the cessation of perception and feeling. For details, see **Mahā Parinibbāna S** (D 16.3.33/2:111n), SD 9, **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15,35/2:70 f) + SD 5.17 (10.2), **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,3.1(11)/3:262), **Vimokkhā S** (A 8.66/4:306), **Saṅkhār’upapatti S** (M 120,37/3:103), SD 3.4.37; also SD 5.17 (10).

⁶¹¹ *Kāyena phassitvā viharati. Phassitvā* has vl: *phusitvā* (Be Se), *phussitvā*. MA defines *phassitvā* thus: Having touched, mastered, attained it with the mental body (*nāma,kāyena phassitvā pāpuṇitvā adhigantvā ti vuttam hoti*) (MA 1:162), ie, experienced directly in one’s own person (body and mind), an idiomatic expression for personal experience. Cf A 2:87.

⁶¹² Or, simply, “the attainment of cessation” (*nirodha,samāpatti*): see SD 48.7 (3.2). See DEB: saññā,-vedayita,nirodha.

⁶¹³ DA 2:524, 3:889; SA 1:278; AA 2:147 (the 7 types of saints), 4:2, 207; PugA 191.

⁶¹⁴ “Freedom of mind and freedom by wisdom,” see **Samaṇa-m-acala S 1** (A 4.87,4 n), SD 20.13.

⁶¹⁵ On the form dhyanas, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (5). On the formless attainments, see SD 24.11 (5).

⁶¹⁶ See (11.5.2.2) n in M 70,15 quote.

rooted and birth is destroyed. They do *not* need to become Buddhas, since they have attained the same awakening as the Buddha himself.⁶¹⁷ [1.4.1.1]

11.5.2.8 The “body-witness,” the view-attainer” and the “faith-freed” see by means of their wisdom that some of their influxes are utterly destroyed (*paññāya assa disvā ekacce āsavā parikkhīṇā honti*) and for them, there is still something to be done by diligence (*appamādena karaṇīyaṃ*). The main difference amongst them is that the body-witness attains dhyana—hence, they are strong in the faculty of concentration—but the other two do not attain dhyana. The view-attainer is strong in the faculty of wisdom, while the faith-freed in the faculty of faith.⁶¹⁸

These 3 terms do not specifically refer to any single type of saint, but are applied relative (*pariyāyena*)⁶¹⁹ to predominant faculty that accompanies their respective attainments. The case of the once-returner is given as an example below [12.1.2.3].

11.5.3 The faith follower

The faith-follower, however, has only some faith in and some affection for the Buddha (*tathāgate assa saddhā, mattaṃ hoti pema, mattaṃ*). However, like the truth-follower, he, too, possesses the 5 faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom (*api c’assa ime dhammā honti seyya-thīdam saddh’indriyaṃ viriy’indriyaṃ sat’indriyaṃ samādh’indriyaṃ paññ’indriyaṃ*).

11.5.4 The truth follower

11.5.4.1 The truth-follower is simply one whose insight has only reached a *partial* understanding of the Buddha’s teaching by his wisdom (*tathāgata-p, paveditā assa dhammā paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*). He is also said to possess all the 5 faculties of faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

11.5.4.2 Hence, both the “faith-follower” and the “truth-follower” see by means of wisdom that their influxes are not yet destroyed. For both—like the previous three—there is still something to be done by diligence. They are almost streamwinners, but not just yet. Moreover, they still need to practise to attain full awakening as arhats.

12 The once-returner

12.1 DEFINITION

12.1.1 Basic definition

12.1.1.1 When a practitioner breaks the first 3 fetters [1.6.6.2] and also significantly weakens greed, hate and delusion, he becomes a **once-returner** (*sakadāgāmī*). In other words, he has destroyed the gross forms of the fourth fetter, sensual desire, and the fifth fetter, ill-will. As a rule, a once-returner is only reborn once in the sense-desire world (*kāma, loka*), as a human or sense-world god.⁶²⁰ However, if he is able to attain dhyana, he will be reborn in one of the form realms or, if he has mastered the formless attainments, even in one of the formless realms. [12.1.2]

12.1.1.2 According to **the (Catukkhā) Saṃyojana Sutta** (A 4.131), the once-returner (and implicitly, the streamwinner, too) have “not abandoned the lower fetters”—despite the fact that they have abandoned *the first 3 fetters* [1.6.6.2]. The Tīkā (Subcommentary) to the Sutta explains that this is because they still have to abandon the fetters of sensual lust and of ill will⁶²¹ (*kāma.rāga, vyāpāda, saṃyojanāni*, AAṬ:Be 2:333) [1.3.1.2]. In other words, they have not abandoned the lower fetters as a

⁶¹⁷ On the differences between *ubhato, bhāga, vimutta* and *paññā, vimutta*, see **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15,36.2) + SD 5.17 (10.1) & SD 4.25 (3.2). On arhats not needing to become Buddhas, see **Mahā Assa, pura S** (M 39,21.3), SD 10.13 (arhathood as the highest goal); **Mahā, nidāna S** (M 15,36.3/2:71,26), SD 5.17; also SD 30.8 (6.4.4). On dealing with the Buddha’s death, see SD 27.6b (4.1.1).

⁶¹⁸ See SD 11.1 (5.2).

⁶¹⁹ See *Pariyāya nippariyāya*, SD 68.7. See also Gethin 2001:133-136.

⁶²⁰ **(Chakka) Miga, sālā S** (A 6.44) records the non-celibate lay once-returner as being reborn in Tusita (A 6.44,2.3), SD 3.2(6); also at **(Dasaka) Miga, sālā S** (A 10.75/1:138), SD 99.8.

⁶²¹ The usual term for “ill will” (*vyāpāda*) is “repulsion” (*paṭigha*) [1.2.1.2].

set. Apparently, this seems to highlight the priority given by the Buddha to the attainment of non-returning and arhathood.⁶²²

12.1.2 Sutta definition

12.1.2.1 The (Sekha) Uddesa Sutta 2 (A 3.86) gives the most detailed definition of the once-returner. The Sutta begins by describing how a monk fulfills moral virtue, but only has moderate concentration and wisdom. Any offence he commits is that of the lesser and minor rules, but even then he rehabilitates himself. However, he diligently keeps to the training-rules that are “fundamental to the holy life” (*ādi, brahma, cariyika*) [1.6.3.2]. His conduct is morally consistent and steady, keeping to the rules he has undertaken. Thus, says the Sutta:

With the utter destruction of 3 fetters and with *the diminishing of greed, hate and delusion*, he is a **once-returner** who, after returning to *this* world only one more time, will make an end of suffering. (A 3.86), SD 80.13⁶²³

12.1.2.2 Note that the Sutta definition mentions “returning to *this* world” (emphasis added). After dying, the once-returner is reborn here again, not in some form realm or formless realm.⁶²⁴ This is because, like the streamwinner, the once-returner, as a rule, does not need dhyana. However, in exceptional cases, a once-returner who does attain dhyana will be able, if he is so inclined, to become a non-returner, or even an arhat, or be reborn in one of the dhyanic realms.

12.1.2.3 A once-returner who attains dhyana is called a **body-witness** (*kāya, sakkhī*) [11.5.2.8]. If he attains once-returning on account of strong faculty of faith, then he is said to be **faith-freed** (*saddhā, vimutta*), and if wisdom is predominant, then, the once-returner is said to be view-attained (*ditthip, patta*), as noted in **the Saviṭṭha Sutta** (A 3.21).⁶²⁵

However, it is unlikely that all once-returners would be dhyana-attainers—then it would defeat the purpose of the concept of once-returning. The very expression “once-return” implies that the cultivation of concentration up to the level of dhyana level is unnecessary for gaining awakening.⁶²⁶

12.1.2.4 Although **the (Sekha) Uddesa Sutta 2** (A 3.86) refers to a monk [12.1.2.1], it is well known that a lay person can easily attain once-returning, too.⁶²⁷ In fact, monastics are usually admonished by the Buddha to attain dhyana so that they will be able to overcome sensual lust to attain at least non-return, if not arhathood. The laity, on the other hand, most of whom “enjoy sensual pleasures” (*kāma, bhogī*) [1.6.4.4], would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to attain dhyana.

However, with a consistent and diligent spiritual life, even such laymen will be able to attain streamwinning, or, with further effort, once-returning. With further diligence, they will be able to attain non-returning, even arhathood itself, in the following life, or certainly within 7 lives [11.4.3].

12.2 TYPES OF ONCE-RETURNERS

12.2.1 The 3 kinds of once-returners

12.2.1.1 The Khuddaka, pāṭha Commentary on the Ratana Sutta (Khp 6) speaks of 3 kinds of once-returners:

- (1) those who attain their fruition in the sense world;
- (2) those who attain their fruition in the form realm; and
- (3) those who attain their fruition in the formless realm. (KhpA 182)

The Commentary further notes that when these 3 kinds of once-returners are considered by the 4 modes of spiritual progress [12.2.1.2], there are, technically, a total of 12 kinds of once-returners.

⁶²² A 4.121/2:133 f (SD 98.19).

⁶²³ For a brief def of a once-returner, see **Sa, upādi, sesa S** (A 9.12/4:380 f), SD 3.3(3).

⁶²⁴ See **Cūḷa Gopālaka S** (M 34,8), SD 61.3.

⁶²⁵ A 3.21/1:120 (SD 80.21).

⁶²⁶ See Analayo, “sakadāgāmī,” Ency Bsm 7:627fg.

⁶²⁷ A list of lay once-returners is given in **Mahā, parinibbāna S** (D 16/2:91-94), SD 9. See also **Giṅjakāvasa-
tha Ss 1** (S 55.8) & **3** (S 55.10). On laymen as once-returners, see also **Naḷaka, pāna S** (M 68,19+22), SD 37.4.

12.2.1.2 There is a whole chapter—the **Paṭipadā Vagga**—in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, dealing with modes of spiritual progress (*paṭipadā*) or simply “ways of progress” (A 4.161-170). There are 4 such modes of spiritual progress, namely:⁶²⁸

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (1) painful progress with slow direct knowledge | <i>dukkhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā</i> |
| (2) painful progress with quick direct knowledge | <i>dukkhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā</i> |
| (3) pleasant progress with slow direct knowledge | <i>sukhā paṭipadā dandhābhiññā</i> |
| (4) pleasant progress with quick direct knowledge | <i>sukhā paṭipadā khippābhiññā</i> |
- (A 4.167 @ SD 46.16; also A 4.161-170/2:149-152, 154 f)⁶²⁹

12.2.2 The 5 kinds of once-returners

The Majjhima Commentary and the Paramattha Mañjusā (the *mahā,ṭīkā* to the Visuddhi, magga) gives a fuller list of 5 kinds of once-returners, thus:

- (1) one who attains the state here, and attains parinirvana (awakens) here;
- (2) one who attains the state here, but attains parinirvana in the deva-world;
- (3) one who attains the state in the deva-world, and attains parinirvana there;
- (4) one who attains the state in the deva-world, dies and is reborn here where he awakens;
- (5) one who attains the state here, is reborn in the deva-world; dies there, and is reborn here, where he attains parinirvana. (MA 1:163; VismMahāṬ:Se 3:655)

These 5 kinds of once-returners seem to be ideal types, as none of them—except perhaps (5)⁶³⁰—is actually mentioned in the suttas.

13 The non-returner

13.1 DEFINITIONS

13.1.1 Brief definitions

13.1.1.1 A non-returner (*anāgāmi*), the third of the 4 kinds of noble saints (*ariya puggala*), is one who has destroyed all the fetters that had kept one bound to the sense-world, so that, after death, he is reborn in one of the pure abodes [13.1.6] and does not return to this world (the sense-world). There, the non-returner exhausts his karmic potential and attains arhathood.

13.1.1.2 The fetters destroyed by the non-returner are **the 5 lower fetters** (*oram, bhāgiya saṃyojana*), namely:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) self-identity view; | <i>sakkāya, diṭṭhi</i> | |
| (2) doubt; | <i>vicikicchā</i> | |
| (3) attachment to rituals and vows; | <i>sīla-b, bata, parāmāsa</i> | |
| (4) sensual lust; | <i>kāma, rāga</i> | |
| (5) repulsion. | <i>paṭigha</i> | (S 45.179) ⁶³¹ |

13.1.1.3 Hence, the non-returner is one who has overcome all links with the sense-world. This is the direct benefit from his mastery of dhyana, by which he is able to transcend the limits of the human body, and so is able to attain dhyanic bliss. However, he may still have some subtle attachments to the form or the formless states, and he may still show some concern or unease for the failures of others in seeing the reality of the Dharma, as he is not yet an arhat.

In other words, a non-returner still needs to overcome these **5 higher fetters** (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*):

⁶²⁸ See (Vitthāra) Paṭipadā S (A 4.162/2:149 f), SD 18.3, esp (1).

⁶²⁹ Also at D 33,1.11(21)/3:228; SD 4.11 (3).

⁶³⁰ See Ajjhata Bahiddhā Saññojana S (A 2.4.5(1)/1:63), SD 80.5.

⁶³¹ Oram, bhāgiya S (S 45.179/5:61), SD 98.11.

(6) desire for form existence;	<i>rūpa,rāga</i>	
(7) desire for formless existence;	<i>arūpa,rāga</i>	
(8) conceit;	<i>māna</i>	
(9) restlessness;	<i>uddhacca</i>	
(10) ignorance.	<i>avijjā</i>	(S 45.180) ⁶³²

13.1.2 Detailed definitions

13.1.2.1 The Ajjhata Bahiddhā Saññojana Sutta (A 2.4.5) call the 5 lower fetters, the “internal fetters” (*ajjhata saṃyojana*). These are fetters that keep us in this sense-world or bring us back to it. Suppose, a morally virtuous person dies and is reborn in a heavenly world. Having died there, he returns to this world.⁶³³

The “internal fetters” are the desire and lust for the sense-existence (*kāma,bhava*), and which refers to the 5 “lower fetters” (*oram,bhāgiya saṃyojana*) [13.1.1.2]. On the other hand, the “external fetters” (*bahiddhā saṃyojana*) are the desire and lust for the form and formless existence (*rūpârūpa,-bhava*), and which refers to the 5 “higher fetters”(uddham,bhāgiya saṃyojana). [13.1.1.3]

Those who are “internally fettered” are the streamwinners and once-returners, and the “externally fettered” are the non-returners, all of whom are the learners (*sekha*) on the path of awakening. Hence, these terms do not apply to worldlings (AA 2:130) [Table 1.2.1.9].

13.1.2.2 The Ajjhata Bahiddhā Saññojana Sutta (A 2.4.5) gives the following definitions of the non-returner:

And who, avuso [friends], is **an individual fettered externally** (*bahiddhā,samyojana*)?

(1) THE PATH TO NON-RETURNING

Here, a monk is morally virtuous. He dwells restrained by the Patimokkha, possessed of good conduct and resort, seeing danger in the smallest faults. Having undertaken the training-rules, he trains in them.

Having attained a certain peaceful freedom of mind, he dwells in it.⁶³⁴

With the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in a certain host of devas.

He is a non-returner, passing away from there, is one who does not return to this state of being.⁶³⁵

This is called **an individual fettered externally**, one who is a non-returner, who does not return to this state of being.⁶³⁶

(2) FROM STREAMWINNING OR ONCE-RETURNING TO NON-RETURNING

Again, avuso, a bhikkhu is morally virtuous Having undertaken the training-rules, he trains in them.

[The streamwinner and the once-returner working for non-returning:]

He is practising for revulsion with sensual pleasures, for dispassion toward them, and for their cessation.⁶³⁷

[The non-returner working for arhathood:]

He is practising for revulsion with states of existence, for dispassion toward them, and for their cessation.⁶³⁸

⁶³² Uddham,bhāgiya S (S 45.180/5:61 f), SD 98.12.

⁶³³ A 2.4.5/1:64 (SD 80.5).

⁶³⁴ Comy: “A certain peaceful freedom of mind” (*aññataram santam ceto,vimuttim*), ie, (he attains) the 4th dhyana among the 8 meditative attainments. It is peaceful because it stills the opposing defilements, and it is a freedom of mind because it is freed from those defilements. (AA 2:134)

⁶³⁵ So tato cuto anāgāmī hoti anāgantā itthattam.

⁶³⁶ Comy: “He is reborn in a group of devas among the pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*). He does not return to this state of the human 5 aggregates, nor is he reborn in a lower realm. Either he is reborn in a higher realm or he attains final nirvana right there.” (AA 2:134).

⁶³⁷ These two lines refer to the streamwinner’s and once-returner’s insight undertaken to destroy lust for the 5 objects of sensual pleasure and to attain the path of non-returning, ie, the insight for the path of non-return (*anāgāmī,magga,vipassanā*). (AA 2:134)

He is practising for the destruction of craving.

He is practising for the destruction of greed.⁶³⁹

With the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in a certain host of devas.

He is a non-returner, passing away from there, is one who does not return to this state of being.

This is called **an individual fettered externally**, one who is a non-returner, who does not return to this state of being. (A 2.4.5/1:64), SD 80.5

13.1.3 The 5 kinds of non-returners

13.1.3.1 Except for the Akaniṭṭhā non-returners, each of these 5 individuals progresses to attain nirvana, according to their faculties (*indriya*), in one of these 5 ways, as stated in **the Niṭṭha Sutta** (A 10.63), thus:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) an attainer of nirvana in the interval [the intermediate state], ⁶⁴⁰ | <i>antarā, parinibbāyī</i> |
| (2) an attainer of nirvana upon landing, ⁶⁴¹ | <i>upahacca, parinibbāyī</i> |
| (3) an attainer of nirvana without exertion, ⁶⁴² | <i>asaṅkhāra, parinibbāyī</i> |
| (4) an attainer of nirvana with exertion, ⁶⁴³ | <i>sa, saṅkhāra, parinibbāyī</i> |
| (5) one bound upstream, heading for the Akaniṭṭha realm. | <i>uddhamsota akaniṭṭha, gāmī</i> |

These are the 5 individuals who are said to win their goals after leaving this world” (*idha vihāya niṭṭhā*).⁶⁴⁴ (A 10.63,3), SD 3.3⁶⁴⁵

In the case of the 5th kind of non-returner (the Akaniṭṭha non-returner), only the first 4 of these conditions apply. Hence, we have a grand total of **24 kinds of non-returners**.⁶⁴⁶

13.1.3.2 The Puggala Paññatti defines the non-returner as “a being who, on account of the abandoning of the 5 lower fetters [13.1.1.2], is one spontaneously born (in the pure abodes) [13.1.6], and without returning from that world (into the sense-world), there attains nirvana.⁶⁴⁷ (Pug 1.41).

13.1.3.3 These 7 kinds of non-returners are detailed in **the Purisa, gati Sutta** (A 7.52).⁶⁴⁸ The suttas define these non-returners as follows.

13.1.4 The 7 kinds of non-returners

The Purisa, gati Sutta (A 7.52) gives a fuller list of the 7 kinds of non-returners with this set of analogies in the famous **parable of the hot iron pot** (*ayo, kapāla upamā*), which are as follows:

When a white-hot iron pot is struck,

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| (1) a spark flies off and at once goes out; | } | <i>antarā, parinibbāyī</i> |
| (2) a spark flies off, then up and then goes out; | | |
| (3) a spark flies off, then up, and <u>before cutting into the ground, goes out</u> (<i>anupahacca, tala</i>); | | |

⁶³⁸ These two lines refer to the non-returner’s insight undertaken to destroy lust for existence and to attain the path of arhathood, ie, the insight for the path of arhathood (*arahatta, magga, vipassanā*). (AA 2:135)

⁶³⁹ These two lines continue the description of the non-returner’s practising for arhathood. However, these lines may also allude to the efforts of the streamwinner and the once-returner to attain higher states.

⁶⁴⁰ D 3:237. For a discussion of the doctrinal problem here and on the intermediate state, see **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

⁶⁴¹ D 3:237, one who while living beyond half of his life-span, or at the moment of death, attains the path for overcoming the higher fetters (Pug 1.43). See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

⁶⁴² D 3:237, one who overcomes the higher fetters without any exertion (Pug 1.44). See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

⁶⁴³ D 3:237, one who overcomes the higher fetters with some exertion (Pug 1.45). See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (4-5).

⁶⁴⁴ On “after leaving this world,” see SD 3.3 (1.2.1.3).

⁶⁴⁵ A 7.52/4:73 f (SD 82.10). For other suttas that list or define the 5 non-returners, see SD 2.17 (4-5, esp 4.4.2).

⁶⁴⁶ KhpA 182 f; cf PmA 319; Vism 710.

⁶⁴⁷ *Idh’ekacco puggalo pañcannaṃ oram, bhāgiyānaṃ saññōjanānaṃ parikkhāya opapātiko hoti. Tattha parinibbāyī anāvatti, dhammo tasmā lokā. Ayam vuccati puggalo anāgāmī.* (Pug 1.41/16).

⁶⁴⁸ A 7.52/4:73 f (SD 82.10). For other suttas that list or define the 5 non-returners, see SD 2.17 (4.4.2).

- (4) a spark flies up and then after cutting into the ground (or upon landing), goes out (*upahacca, tala*);
- (5) a spark flies up and falls onto a bit of grass or sticks, igniting them, then cools down after they are consumed;
- (6) a spark flies and falls onto a large heap of grass or sticks, but cools down after they are consumed;
- (7) a spark flies up and falls onto a heap of grass or sticks such that a fire spreads, but then goes out when it reaches water or rock, etc. (A 7.52), SD 82.10⁶⁴⁹

Individuals (1)-(3) refers to the non-returners who, after dying here, their consciousnesses dwell as intermediate states (that is, after death but before rebirth).⁶⁵⁰

13.1.4 (1) The attainer of nirvana in the interval [the intermediate state] (*antarā, parinibbāyī*) is one who, on account of the abandoning of the 5 lower fetters, dies from here and arises in an intermediate state where he abandons the higher fetters and attains arhathood, that, is nirvana.⁶⁵¹ Although this is the shortest-lived of the non-returners, he is also the one who attains arhathood and passes finally away the fastest.

13.1.4 (2) This second kind of non-returner, too, is **an attainer of nirvana in the interval**, that is, he gains awakening as an intermediate being. We are not told what happens to him after that. According to **the Kutūhala, sāla Sutta** (S 44.9), the Buddha tells us that “when a being has laid down this body, but is not yet been reborn in another body, it is fuelled by craving, I say.”⁶⁵²

Craving is part of the fetter of sensual lust (*kāma, rāga*). When the individual abandons all the lower fetters, he ends the intermediate state and attains awakening. If he does not go on to abandon the higher fetters, too, he would then be reborn into a pure abode, which is likely to be the case here. He will then work towards arhathood until the end of his natural lifespan there.

13.1.4 (3). This fourth kind of non-returner, too, is **an attainer of nirvana in the interval**, but does so “cutting into the ground,” that is, just at the moment of emerging from the intermediate state—like a chicken breaking through the egg-shell and emerging from it, that is, passing finally away into nirvana (that is without any remains), that is, free of all the 5 aggregates.⁶⁵³ Here, we clearly have a case of the individual, upon emerging from the intermediate state, abandons the higher fetters, attains arhathood and passes finally away, all at the same time!

13.1.4 (4). The attainer of nirvana upon landing (*upahacca, parinibbāyī*) refers to a non-returner who attains nirvana “upon landing” in a pure abode, that is, immediately on being reborn therein. This means that “upon being reborn” in a pure abode, he abandons the higher fetters and awakens as an arhat (attains nirvana with remains).⁶⁵⁴

The Commentaries, however, say that this individual is one who abandons the higher fetters only between the midpoint of his life-span and his death in a pure abode.⁶⁵⁵ However, the sutta figure of a spark flying up “and then after cutting into the ground (or upon landing), goes out” clearly points to his attaining nirvana upon rebirth in the pure abode.

13.1.4 (5) The attainer of nirvana without exertion (*asañkhāra, parinibbāyī*) is one who, having overcome the higher fetters, is reborn in a pure abode, and almost at once attains final nirvana. **The Purisa, gati Sutta** (A 7.52) compares the nirvana of this individual to a flying spark that lands on a bit of grass or sticks, igniting them or causing them to smoulder, then cools down after they are consumed.

⁶⁴⁹ A 7.52/4:70-74 (SD 82.10); see also DA 1030 = AA 2:350; cf SA 3:114; AA 4:7; Masefield 1986:115.

⁶⁵⁰ See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17.

⁶⁵¹ See **Is rebirth immediate?** SD 2.17 (6-9).

⁶⁵² S 44.9,15 (SD 2.17).

⁶⁵³ On the 2 kinds of nirvana, see SD 45.18 (2.5).

⁶⁵⁴ On the 2 kinds of nirvana, see SD 45.18 (2.5).

⁶⁵⁵ AA 4:39; KhpA 182; Vism 23.56+57/710.

The symbolism of “igniting (a fire)” (*aggim janeyya*) usually refers to some kind of concentration or dhyana leading to his abandoning of the lower fetters. In this case, as “a spark ... a bit of grass or sticks” (*papaṭikā ... paritte tiṇa,puñje vā kaṭṭha,puñje vā*) suggests only *some* level of concentration, perhaps only the first or maybe second, dhyana.⁶⁵⁶

The (Sa,saṅkhāra) Paṭipadā Sutta (A 4.169) and **the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3),⁶⁵⁷ discuss these two kinds of non-returners: the one who attains final nirvana without effort (*asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*) and the one who attains final nirvana with some effort (*sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*). The former is the one who has mastered the 4 dhyanas (described in stock formula in **the (Sa,saṅkhāra) Paṭipadā Sutta**, A 4.169,5).⁶⁵⁸

13.1.4 (6) The attainer of nirvana with exertion (*sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*) is one who, having overcome the higher fetters with *some* exertion, attains final nirvana. **The Purisa,gati Sutta** (A 7.52) compares his attaining nirvana to a flying spark of molten metal falling onto a large heap of grass or sticks, igniting them or causing them to smoulder, but which cools down after they are consumed. This figure suggests that he attains nirvana only after having lived on in that pure abode.

The (Sa,saṅkhāra) Paṭipadā Sutta (A 4.169) and **the (Bojjhaṅga) Sīla Sutta** (S 46.3),⁶⁵⁹ discuss these two kinds of non-returners: the one who attains final nirvana without effort (*asaṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*) and the one who attains final nirvana with some effort (*sa,saṅkhāra,parinibbāyī*). The latter practises the more austere meditations, such as the contemplation of the body, the reflection on the repulsiveness of food, the disenchantment with all the world, the perception of impermanence in all formations, and the recollection of death.⁶⁶⁰

Considering the state of a non-returner in the pure abodes (the highest of the form realms, hence, he does not have a physical body like ours), he must have cultivated these meditations while he was still a human. As a non-returner, he simply enters and remains in the dhyana at will, and working to weaken and, subsequently, remove the vestiges of his karmic potential.

13.1.4 (7) The one bound upstream, heading for Akaniṭṭha (*uddham,sota akaniṭṭhā,gāmī*).

13.1.4.1 The fifth and last kind of non-returner is the slowest of them in terms of attaining nirvana. He progresses through each one of the pure abodes until he attains nirvana upon reaching Akaniṭṭha. **The Purisa,gati Sutta** (A 7.52) defines him as follows:

Here, a monk practises, thus:

“It might not be, and it might not be mine.

It will not be; it will not be mine.

I am abandoning what exists, what has come to be.”⁶⁶¹

He attains equanimity. He finds no pleasure in existence; he finds no pleasure in arising.⁶⁶²

He sees with right wisdom: “There is a higher state that is peaceful.”

Yet, he has not realized everything regarding the all concerning that state.⁶⁶³

He has not abandoned everything regarding the all in terms of latent tendency of conceit.

⁶⁵⁶ On the need of dhyana for attaining non-returning, see SD 8.5 (11.3.2).

⁶⁵⁷ S 46.3/5:69 f (SD 10.15).

⁶⁵⁸ A 4.169/2:155-157 (SD 98.17); see also SD 8.5 (11.3).

⁶⁵⁹ S 46.3/5:69 f (SD 10.15).

⁶⁶⁰ A 4.169/2:155-157 (SD 50.7); see also SD 8.5 (11.3).

⁶⁶¹ *No c’assa, no ca me siyā, na bhavossati, na me bhavissati, yad atthi yaṃ bhūtaṃ, taṃ pajahāmiti*. This famous but difficult line related to the attaining of non-returning (*anāgāmitā*) is spoken and explained by the Buddha himself at **Udāna S** (S 22.55), SD 17.16.

⁶⁶² The first half of this passage shows that he has abandoned the fetters: (6) desire for form existence, and (7) desire for formless existence. The next three sentences show that he still has the last 3 fetters: (8) conceit, (9) restlessness and (10) ignorance.

⁶⁶³ *Tañ ca khv-assa padaṃ na sabbena sabbam sacchikataṃ hoti*. The phrase *sabbena sabbam* (a wordplay on the senses or the body) is found in the foll three sentences alluding to the last 3 fetters. This is a tricky phrase apparently missed by most translators: see SD 43.8 (2.2).

He has not abandoned everything regarding the all in terms of the latent tendency of the lust for existence.

He has not abandoned everything regarding the all in terms of the latent tendency of ignorance.

With the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters, he becomes one bound upstream, heading for the Akanitṭha realm. (A 7.52), SD 82.10

13.1.4.2 The Sutta further compares his nirvana to a spark from a white-hot pot which flies up and falls into a heap of grass or sticks, igniting a fire that spreads, but then goes out when it reaches water or rocks, etc.⁶⁶⁴ This describes his “fiery” (dhyanic) progress upwards through the pure abodes [13.1.6].

13.1.4.3 **The Puggala Paññatti** defines the one bound upstream, heading for Akanitṭha, as follows:

Here, a certain individual, with the utter destruction of the 5 lower fetters is one spontaneously reborn. Therein, he attains final nirvana without returning from that world.

Falling [Dying] from Avihā, he goes to	Atappā.	
Falling from Atappā, he goes to	Sudassa.	
Falling from Sudassa, he goes to	Sudassī.	
Falling from Sudassī, he goes to	Akanitṭhā.	
There, abandoning the higher fetters, he brings forth the noble path. Such an individual is called one bound upstream, heading for	Akanitṭha.	(Pug 1.46/17)

13.1.4.4 In the case of this last kind of non-returner, we can imagine him going through a series of “Chinese” caverns, where, after entering the first portal leading into a huge beautiful cavern (Avihā), he goes through a second portal into another cavern (Atappā), then another portal (into Sudassā), and another (into Sudassī), and then a final portal (into Akanitṭhā). From there, the remaining blissful journey would take 16,000 aeons!⁶⁶⁵

13.1.5 Observations

13.1.5.1 Upon attaining nirvana (also called “final or full nirvana,” *parinibbāna*), the non-returners continue to live on as arhats for the rest of their karmic life-span. As arhats, they generate no new karma, but live in the bliss of the habitual meditative state. These pure-abode non-returners, then, are the longest lived arhats who are still living in the pure abodes [13.1.6] even now in our own time since this is a buddha-epoch.

13.1.5.2 Although it is commonly understood that the state of non-returning (*anāgāmitā*) requires the attaining of dhyana [8.3], we have sutta evidence to show that there are cases of **non-returners who apparently do not rely on dhyana** for their attainment. This interesting situation is recorded in two suttas of the same name, the Uggā Suttas.

In **the (Vesālika) Uggā Sutta** (A 8.21), the Buddha declares that Uggā of Vesālī has abandoned all 5 lower fetters,⁶⁶⁶ and in the second, **the (Hatthi,gāmika) Uggā Sutta** (A 8.22), he states that Uggā of Hatthi,gāma has no fetters bound by which he might return to this world.⁶⁶⁷ Although their spiritual status as non-returners is confirmed, the Buddha does not mention any dhyanic attainments amongst their 8 wonderful qualities.

These accounts are, of course, exceptions to the rule. Considering the nature of non-returning (especially its transcending of all sensual desires), we should not conclude that *no* dhyana is involved at all. Rather, we should consider that the lay non-returners have mastered at least one or two dhyanas. The point remains that lay practitioners, too, can attain non-returning.

⁶⁶⁴ A 7.52/4:70-74; DA 1030 = AA 2:350; cf SA 3:114; AA 4:7.

⁶⁶⁵ See **Purisa,gati S** (A 7.52), SD 82.10.

⁶⁶⁶ **(Vesālika) Uggā S** (A 8.21), SD 70.3.

⁶⁶⁷ **(Hatthi,gāmaka) Uggā S** (A 8.22,12), SD 45.15.

13.1.6 The pure abodes (*suddh'āvāsa*)

13.1.6.1 The *Suddh'āvāsa* or “pure abodes” are a group of 5 of the highest form brahma-heavens inhabited only by non-returners, and where they in time attain arhathood and nirvana. The inhabitants of the respective pure abodes and respective lifespans, according to **the Saṅkhār'upapatti Sutta** (M 120), are:

Āviha	“Non-declining,”	1000 full world-cycles (<i>mahā,kappa</i>) ⁶⁶⁸
Ātappa	“Untroubled”	2000 full world-cycles
Sudassā	“Beautifully visible”	4000 full world-cycles
Sudassī	“Clear-visioned”	8000 full world-cycles
Akaṇiṭṭha	“Peerless”	16,000 full world-cycles (M 120/3:102 f), SD 3.4 ⁶⁶⁹

13.1.6.2 The *Suddhāvāsā* heavens are described as being “**like the camping-grounds (or way-stations) for the buddhas**” (*buddhānaṃ khandh'āvāra-ṭ,thāna,sadisā*) (AA 4:190). The texts give no further details but this probably means that, of all the realms in the whole universe, the *Suddhāvāsā* brahmas are the only ones who have first knowledge of a buddha's advent. Another possible meaning of the phrase is that the buddhas would, if they wish to, have a respite from the “normal” world, would spend their time there.

13.1.6.3 Bodhisattvas are never born there (SnA 1:50; BA 224). This is because it is a realm comprising only of non-returners. None of them return to this world (unless they choose to visit it on special occasions, such as in connection the buddha), but remain in *Suddhāvāsā* working out their final awakening.

13.1.6.4 The *Suddhāvāsā* brahmas, it is said, know how many buddhas will be born in any particular world-cycle (*kappa*) by observing the number of lotuses which spring up on the site of the “awakening-seat” (*bodhi,pallanka*) when the earth gradually emerges after the destruction of the universe (DA 2:411 f).

13.1.6.5 There is a popular commentarial belief that when a buddha is about to be born, it is said that the *Suddhāvāsā* brahmas inspire a knowledge of the signs of the great being in the Vedas and teach this lore amongst humans in the guise of brahmins, calling such knowledge the Buddha Mantra (*buddha,manta*). Men learn it and are thus able to recognize the great being.⁶⁷⁰

It is said that when the time is right for the bodhisattva to renounce the world, the *Suddhāvāsā* brahmas present **the 4 omens** (*pubba,nimitta*) amongst humans which lead to the bodhisattva's renunciation in his last life (eg, DA 2:455 f).

13.1.6.6 Sometimes, for countless world cycles (*asaṅkheyya kappa*), when no buddhas arise in the world, *Suddhāvāsā* would remain empty (MA 1:36; AA 4:190).⁶⁷¹ The Buddha is mentioned as having visited the *Suddhāvāsā*, the most famous visit of which is that recorded in the *Suddh'āvāsa* chapter of **the Mahā'padāna Sutta** (D 14).⁶⁷²

14 The arhat

14.1 THE LAST TWO NOBLE INDIVIDUALS

14.1.1 Definitions

14.1.1.1 An arhat (from the Sanskrit root √ARH, “to deserve”; *arahati*, “he deserves, is worthy”)⁶⁷³ that is, someone who deserves or is worthy of respect and so on because he is truly free from ignorance and liberated from suffering. He has fully realized the Buddha's teaching and so stands as an

⁶⁶⁸ A “full world-cycle” (*mahā,kappa*) is the full cycle of a world-period or universe's cycle (V 3:4 = D 3:51, 111 = It 99; D 1:14; A 2:142). For cosmological map, see Kevaḍḍha S (D 11), SD 1.7 Appendix; for world cycle, see Aggañña S (D 27), SD 2.19.

⁶⁶⁹ D 33,2.1(17)/3:237; Vbh 425; Pug 42-46.

⁶⁷⁰ VA 1:39, 140; DA 1:247-249; MA 3:363 f; AA 2:262; NcA 15; SnA 2:448.

⁶⁷¹ See SD 49.8b (13.1.1.5).

⁶⁷² D 14,3.34-37/2:50 (SD 49.8a) + SD 49.8b (13).

⁶⁷³ “From what you claim, you are worthy as a conqueror of the endless” (*yathā kho tvam ... paṭijānāsi arahasi ananta,jino*, V 1:8,27 = M 1:171,13), SD 1.11.

exemplar for others. As a fully liberated saint, his awakening is the same as that of the Buddha's—like him, too, he would not have any more rebirth.⁶⁷⁴

14.1.1.2 When we overcome all the higher fetters (*uddham, bhāgiya saṃyojana*)—which implies having overcome the lower fetters (*oram, bhāgiya saṃyojana*) [13.1.1.2], too—we become arhats. An arhat, in other words, has abandoned all the defilements that fetter one to the “lower world,” that is, one's senses and the sense-world, and also the higher fetters which comprise desire for form existence and the formless existence, and also the subtler fetters of conceit, restlessness and ignorance [13.1.1.3].

14.1.1.3 The fetter of **the desire for form existence** (*rūpa, rāga*) is an attachment to the form dhyanas, while **the desire for formless existence** (*arūpa, rāga*) is an attachment to the formless dhyanas. In either case, there is a wrong view that they are really pleasurable and permanent—they are actually impermanent and ultimately unsatisfactory, since they do not (in themselves) bring us awakening, the liberation from suffering.

14.1.1.4 The last 3 fetters—conceit, restlessness and ignorance—are what we may call, respectively, the psychological fetter, the emotional fetter [14.1.1.5] and the existential fetter [14.1.1.6]. **Conceit** (*māna*) is the psychological fetter in the sense that makes us perceive ourself, others and what is outside of us in measurable terms, that is, in a limited, even scarce, manner.

Hence, we see what we do not have, or do not have enough of, as being desirable. And when we perceive someone as lacking those desirable qualities, we reject him. We see ourself as being “better than” another, or “same as” another, or “inferior to” another. As we think, so we act; as we act, so we are—the victims of our own circumstances.⁶⁷⁵

The arhat, realizing the true universal characteristic of non-self (*anattā*), sees through all these distorted ways of seeing things. He realizes how long he has been fooled by conceit. He is joyful that he is now liberated from this self-limitation, that his “self” is really his own mind, capable of boundless goodness and freedom. So, he laughs at the world that has held him so tightly, and now he is free. Hence, such a wisdom is called the “laughing wisdom” (*hāsa, paññā*).⁶⁷⁶

14.1.1.5 Restlessness (*uddhacca*) is not the restlessness that is a hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) [6.3.1.3 (4)] to meditation, but a subtler defilement that stands between the non-returner and arhathood. We can call this the emotional fetter because it concerns the non-returner's emotions. This can be compared to Vimalakīrti's sickness, who declares that he is sick “because the whole world is sick.”⁶⁷⁷

The non-returner, in his compassion, may still be troubled in noticing how frivolous worldlings are, not cultivating moral virtue, neglecting mindfulness and meditation, seeing only difficulty and faults in the suttas—caught in self-views, doubts and superstitions. Perhaps, he wishes to do more, or feels that he lacks the capability to help others, and so on. Such thoughts unsettle his heart with what is called “Dharma restlessness” (*dhamm'uddhacca*).⁶⁷⁸

Indeed, it is true that being an arhat gives us the best skills (by way of wisdom and compassion) to help others move towards the path of awakening, and to walk that path. However, when such restlessness troubles a non-returner, it is like a medical senior who worries that he would not be able to help or heal the sick. He simply has to put away such ideas and simply focus on his task at hand.⁶⁷⁹

14.1.1.6 Ignorance (*avijjā*) is the existential fetter simply because it holds us back from self-knowing, understanding and liberation. It is the ultimate narcissistic knowledge, one that only wants us to know, not ourself, but that we have a self (*attā*), a unique, unchanging, endless entity.

Craving, however, contradicts any such notion, and renders us seemingly empty and worthless, so that we want to seek that abiding entity or its image in something outside of us, something that we see as unique, omnipotent and eternal. In that sense, craving is *the* ultimate fetter, the ending of which

⁶⁷⁴ See **Sambuddha S** (S 22.58), SD 49.10.

⁶⁷⁵ See **Me: The nature of conceit**, SD 19.2a.

⁶⁷⁶ Pm 2:185.

⁶⁷⁷ From Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa (a 2nd-century CE Mahāyāna work) ch 3. This episode is helpful insofar as it reflects the historical Buddha's teaching so that we better appreciate it.

⁶⁷⁸ SD 41.5 (5); SD 32.7 (2.1.4, 2.2.3); SD 41.4 (2.2.1).

⁶⁷⁹ Things may get even more painfully complicated if we respond by suggesting that the medical senior should see himself as a fully qualified doctor, even postpone his final exams and graduation until he has healed all the sick and cured every disease—if such a thing is possible or meaningful.

frees us from the world so that we fully awaken to true reality, liberation, wisdom and boundless compassion.

14.2.0 THE 4 KINDS OF ARHATS

We will now briefly examine the 4 main kinds of arhats, often mentioned in the suttas, that is:⁶⁸⁰

14.2	The wisdom-freed arhat	<i>paññā, vimutta arahata</i>
14.3	The arhat freed both ways	<i>ubhato, bhāga, vimutta arahata</i>
14.4	The 3-knowledge arhat	<i>te, vijja arahata</i>
14.5	The 6-knowledge arhat	<i>cha-ḷ-abhiñña arahata</i>

14.2 THE WISDOM-FREED ARHAT (*PAÑÑĀ, VIMUTTA*)

14.2.1 We have already noted that the wisdom-freed arhat attains only the form dhyanas, but he gains enough wisdom for his liberation as an arhat [11.5.2.5]. Moreover, both the arhats freed-both-ways and the one wisdom-freed have the same kind of liberating wisdom, that is, the understanding of the 4 noble truths [11.5.2.7].

14.2.2 From **the Cha-b, bisodhana Sutta** (M 112), we know that the wisdom-freed arhat uses any or all of the 4 dhyanas as the basis for calm (*samatha*), that is, dhyana, and with that inner calm and clarity, he gains the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (*āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa*) that ends rebirth.⁶⁸¹

14.3 THE ARHAT FREED BOTH WAYS (*UBHATO. BHĀGA, VIMUTTA*)

14.3.1 Meditation mastery

14.3.1.1 We have already noted [11.5.2.3] that the arhat freed both ways is an adept with dhyanas—who has attained the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*)—both the form and the formless dhyanas, and also with the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling. The term *ubhato, bhāga, vimutta* means (1) freed *through* two “parts,” and (2) freed *from* two “parts” (*ubhato, bhāga*). Through attaining the formless spheres, he is freed from the body (*kāya*), and through attaining the path of arhathood (*agga, magga*, “the foremost path”), he is freed from the mind (*nāma*).⁶⁸²

14.3.1.2 In other words, he is freed in both body and mind.⁶⁸³ The one “freed both ways,” in other words, attains the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*),⁶⁸⁴ which here include the “9 dhyanas,”⁶⁸⁵ that is, the 4 form dhyanas, the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation. His mind is fully freed from defilements and rebirth by the attaining of the fruit of arhathood. Hence, he is freed “both ways,” in both body and mind.⁶⁸⁶ This kind of saint is fully accomplished in meditation.⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁰ These 4 kinds of arhats are mentioned in S 1:191: see also SD 1.8 (2.2.3); SD 4.25 (6.3) summary.

⁶⁸¹ M 112, 18-20 (SD 59.7).

⁶⁸² DA 2:524, 3:889; SA 1:278; AA 2:147 (the 7 types of saints), 4:2, 207; PugA 191.

⁶⁸³ In **Upasīva Māṇava Pucchā** (Sn 5.7), the Buddha is said to be “Thus the sage is free in both body and mind” (*evaṃ muni nāma, kayā vimutto*, Sn 1074).

⁶⁸⁴ Briefly, **the 8 liberations** are those of: (1) one with physical form sees physical forms (*rūpī rūpāni passati*); (2) one who does not see physical form internally, but sees physical forms externally (*ajjhataṃ arūpa, saññī bahiddhā rūpāni passati*); (3) one freed after contemplating the idea of the beautiful (*subhan’ t’eva adhimutto hoti*); (4) the sphere of infinite space; (5) the sphere of infinite consciousness; (6) the sphere of nothingness; (7) the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; and (8) the cessation of perception and feeling (Pm 2:38-40). Comy on **Mahā Sakul’udāyi S** (M 77, 22/2:13) says that these liberations are the mind’s full (but temporary) release from the opposing states and its full (but temporary) release by delighting in the object (*ārammaṇa*) (MA 3:255, cf 255-259). See **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 15), SD 5.17 (10). For details, see SD 49.5b (1); also SD 5.17 (10).

⁶⁸⁵ Properly known as the 9 progressive abidings (*anupubba, vihāra*), comprising: the 4 form dhyanas (*rūpa jhāna*), the 4 formless dhyanas (*arūpa jhāna*), and the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā, vedayita, nirodha* or *nirodha, samāpatti*) (D 3:265, 290; A 4:410). These are different from the 8 liberations (see prec n).

⁶⁸⁶ See A Wynne 2002.

14.3.2 The Sacchikaraṇīya Sutta

The Sacchikaraṇīya Sutta (A 4.189) summarizes the attainments of the arhat freed both ways in 4 ways, thus:

SD 10.16(14.3)

Sacchikaraṇīya Sutta

The Discourse on What is to be Realized | A 4.189/2:182 f

Traditional: A 4.4.4.9 = Aṅguttara 4, Catukka Nipāta 4, Catuttha Paṇṇāsaka 4, Brāhmaṇa Vagga 9

Theme: The 4 realizations of an arhat freed both ways

- 1 Bhikshus, there are these 4 states to be realized. What are the four? [183]
- 2 There are, bhikshus, states to be realized through the body. *kāya*
 There are, bhikshus, states to be realized through memory. *sati*
 There are, bhikshus, states to be realized through the eye. *cakkhu*
 There are, bhikshus, states to be realized through wisdom. *paññā*
- 3 (1) What, bhikshus, are the states **to be realized through the body**?
The 8 liberations, bhikshus, are to be realized through the body.⁶⁸⁸ *aṭṭha, vimokkha*
- 4 (2) What, bhikshus, are the states **to be realized through memory**?
One's past abodes are to be realized through memory. *pubbe, nivāsa*
- 5 (3) What, bhikshus, are the states **to be realized through the eye**?
The passing away and rebirth of beings are to be realized through the eye. *satta cut'upapāta*⁶⁸⁹
- 6 (4) What, bhikshus, are the states **to be realized through wisdom**?
The destruction of the influxes are to be realized by wisdom. *āsava-k, khaya*
- 7 These, bhikshus, are the 4 states to be realized.

— evaṃ —

14.3.3 These 4 states are the special qualities of the arhat freed both ways, the full-fledged awakened saint. That is to say, he has realized by himself the following:

- (1) the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha vimokkha*) [11.5.2.2];
- (2) the knowledge of the recollection of past lives (knowledge of rebirth) (*pubbe, nivāsānussati ñāṇa*);
- (3) the knowledge of the rise and fall of beings or the “divine eye” (knowledge of karma) (*cutū-papāta ñāṇa*); and
- (4) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes.⁶⁹⁰

However, it is the fourth and last quality which actually define the arhat, since the other three qualities can, in some degree at least be found in other monastics, even in non-Buddhist individuals.

14.4 THE 3-KNOWLEDGE ARHAT

14.4.1 Transvaluation and natural adaptation

14.4.1.1 The term “3 knowledges” (*te, vijjā*; adjective, *te, vijja*) comes from the famous ancient Vedic trilogy of the Ṛg-veda (hymns to Vedic deities), Sāma-veda (hymn guide for the Vedic cantor)

⁶⁸⁷ **Nivāpa S** (M 25,20/1:160), SD 61,2; **Ariya Pariyesanā S** (M 26,42/1:174), SD 1.11; **Cūla Sārôpama S** (M 30,21/1:204), SD 53.9; **Cūla Go,siṅga S** (M 31,18/1:209), SD 44.11; **Sacchikaraṇīya S** (A 4.189/2:183), SD 10.16 (14.3).

⁶⁸⁸ On the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha vimokkha*), see SD 5.17 (10); detailed study, SD 49.5b (3).

⁶⁸⁹ Ee *cutuppāto* (wr). *Uppāta* is “an unusual or startling event, taken as an omen or portent.”

⁶⁹⁰ M 112,18-20 (SD 59.7). The 4 influxes are those of (1) sensual desire (*kām'āsava*), (2) existence (*bhav'āsava*), (3) views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), and (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*); a list of 3 influxes (omitting views) is prob older: SD 30.3 (3.2)

and the Yājur-veda (mantras and their proper usage).⁶⁹¹ The tone of the ancient texts moves generally from the speculative to the ritualistic. The idea was to know the unknown represented by various gods and forces. What can be known was embodied in the forest-dwelling seers (*ṛṣi*; Pali, *isi*). The medium by which humans know the unknown is ritualistically communicated through the “word” or mantra (Skt; Pali, *mantā*).

14.4.1.2 By the Buddha’s time, northern central India (the central Gangetic plain) was rapidly urbanizing with the signs of a nascent Indian empire under various kings. Such an empire conducted to a large population, culture, trade, technology, economic specialization, the rise of personal wealth and leisure—helpful, too, for the rise of philosophy. The wise and observant in such a society began to ask various basic questions, especially about the meaning and purpose of life.

14.4.1.3 Ever since human society evolved, its growth and shape are often determined by a small elite who wielded power or authority over the masses. It was insufficient for the elite to control, much less shape, society with power alone, because that power had to be forced upon the masses who should, at they very least, fear it.

Another great source of power came from the ability or perceived ability of the elite to communicate the unknown to society—simple examples of which would be the conditions for public safety and prosperity, for the fertility of crops, and for the general well being of the masses—or communicate *with* the unknown (usually identified as some kind of imagined higher force, such as the gods or God). Those who specialized in the mustering of such powers were called “priests” in ancient cultures.

14.4.1.4 As a class, the priests often worked with the powerful, especially kings and royalty, for a symbiotic benefit of the best that society could offer them simply on account of their position. In other words, more often than not, the priests were a powerful leisurely class who were not productively engaged, except in the production and propagation of ideas and techniques to control the masses, wealth and resources—their tool was called religion.

14.4.1.5 In the Buddha’s time, there were 4 dominant social classes: the powerful kshatriyas (*khattiya*), the priestly brahmins (*brāhmaṇa*), the mercantile vaishyas (*vessa*) and the working class or shudras (*sudda*). In the Buddha’s society (the central Gangetic plain), the kshatriyas had greater influence than any other class. The brahmins’ influence was on the wane, but they refused to relent. It might be said that the Buddha’s influence seriously robbed the brahmins of their grip over society.

14.4.1.6 The suttas have numerous records of how the Buddha countered the false and exploitative ideas and practices of the brahmins. One of the most effective skillful means the Buddha uses to correct or reject brahminical casuistry and jesuitry is that of **transvaluation**,⁶⁹² that is, the natural adaptation of unhelpful brahminical ideas or practice into wholesome Buddhist ones. An example of this is the Buddha’s use of the term “3 knowledges” (*te, vijja*) to describe the early arhats.

Using this widely familiar term (especially familiar to the brahmins and the learned), the Buddha “transvaluates” or naturally adapts the negative brahminical values of speculative and ritualistic religiosity of the Vedas into a self-empowering and liberating spirituality highlighted by the *te, vijja* arhats, *the* liberated saints of the 3 knowledges. [14.4.3.1]

14.4.2 The Puggala Paññatti defines the “3-knowledge” arhat simply as “an individual accomplished in the 3 knowledges” (*tīhi vijjāhi samannāgato puggalo te, vijjo*, Pug 1.26/14). Its Commentary adds that there are two kinds of such arhats: those who gain their knowledge of rebirth and karma first, then attain arhathood, and those those attain arhathood first, and then gain their knowledge of rebirth and karma. (PugA 188 f)

⁶⁹¹ **Te, vijja S** (D 13) @ SD 1.8 (2.1).

⁶⁹² This term is from Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), renowned German philosopher, who in his *The Anti-christ* (1895), compares Christianity to Buddhism, highlighting the latter’s wholesome and human-centred qualities. A good example is that while Christianity is “the struggle against sin,” Buddhism is “the struggle against suffering.” While Christianity is full of “revengefulness” and “antipathy” (eg, the Last Judgment), Buddhism promotes “benevolence, being kind, as health-promoting.” Buddhism is also known to be the more “honest” of the two religions, for its being strictly “phenomenalistic”, but “Christianity makes a thousand promises but *keeps none*.” Hence, Nietzsche calls for a “transvaluation of all values.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transvaluation_of_values.

14.4.3 The 3-knowledge arhat

14.4.3.1 The suttas define the 3-knowledge arhat (*te, vijja arahata*) as one who, with calm (*samatha*) as basis, has attained the 4 form dhyanas or more.⁶⁹³ The 3 knowledges are:⁶⁹⁴

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) the recollection of past lives (retro-cognition); | <i>pubbe, nivāsānussati ñāṇa</i> |
| (2) the divine eye (clairvoyance); and | <i>dibba, cakkhu</i> |
| (3) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes that ends rebirth. | <i>āsava-k, khaya ñāṇa</i> |
- Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33, 1.10(58))

All such powers and attainments are clearly dhyana-based, attesting to the necessity for dhyana in the attaining of arhatood.

14.4.3.2 The 3 knowledges [14.4.3.1] are the same as the set of 4 realizations mentioned in **the Sacchikaraṇīya Sutta** (A 4.189), but without the first realization, that is, the 8 liberations [14.3.3]. The Sutta lists the first of 4 realizations as the 8 liberations. Clearly, this set was introduced late during the sutta period (the centuries when the suttas were compiled, roughly from the second period of the ministry up to Asoka’s time). It is possible the “8-liberations” set was introduced so late during the sutta period that it remained relatively obscure and not fully explained.⁶⁹⁵

14.4.3.3 The notion of a “**sutta period**” is a theoretical device that helps us envision the evolution of the sutta materials through internal evidence. Such evidence, when corroborated with historical dates and events, would be even more valuable in giving us a clearer timing of the rise of early Buddhist literature. It is roughly divided into two periods: the first being when the sutta materials which were not yet systematized (with almost no technical terms and few doctrinal sets), characterized by the contents of most of **the Sutta Nipāta**. The second period is when these materials had more technicalities and doctrinal sets, characterized by most suttas of **the Dīgha Nikāya**, such as the Mahā, parinibbāna Sutta, and most of the texts of **the Khuddaka Nikāya**.⁶⁹⁶

14.4.4 The 8 liberations. The 1st realization—that of the 8 liberations—of **the Sacchikaraṇīya Sutta** [14.3.3] is not mentioned in the defining qualities of the 3-knowledge arhats because they need not have them. We have two more kinds of arhats (as noted earlier): the wisdom-freed [14.2] and the one freed both ways [14.3]. Only the arhat freed both ways has attained the 8 liberations.

14.5 THE 6-KNOWLEDGE ARHAT

14.5.1 The age of the Pali terms

14.5.1.1 The “3-knowledge arhat”⁶⁹⁷—on account of the term’s brevity and being less often mentioned than the “6-knowledge arhat”—suggests that it is older than the latter. The concept of the 6-knowledge arhat is clearly an elaboration of the “3 knowledges” being extended to 6 knowledges.

14.5.1.2 In fact, we still see the 3 knowledges intact in this later term, as knowledges (4) to (6) of the 6 knowledges. To this ancient core set of knowledges were added the first 3 knowledges, which are collectively called “superhuman or psychic powers” (*iddhi*). [14.5.2]

14.5.1.3 Interestingly, the 6 knowledges are not listed in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33), mentioned in **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34) [14.5.2.1]. Conversely, the 3 knowledges are mentioned in **the Saṅgīti Sutta** (D 33), but not in **the Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34) [14.4.3.1]. This seems to support the surmise that the concept of “3 knowledge arhat” is older than the “6-knowledge arhat.” Does this mean, too, that the Saṅgīti Sutta is an older compilation, and the Das’uttara Sutta a later one?

⁶⁹³ **Bhaya Bherava S** (M 4,23-33/1:21-23), SD 44.3; **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73,18-26/1:494-496), SD 27.4.

⁶⁹⁴ On the 3 knowledges, see SD 1.8 (2.2). For details of these powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (5).

⁶⁹⁵ On the 8 liberations, see SD 49.5b (3).

⁶⁹⁶ The first sutta period roughly encompasses the Buddha’s 45-year ministry; hence, it is itself further divided into two more periods (5th century BCE). The second sutta period stretches after the Buddha’s passing (esp the 1st council) up to Asoka’s time (the 3rd council) (around 250 BCE and a couple of centuries later).

⁶⁹⁷ See, eg, S 6.5/1:146 (v 582), 8.7/1:191.

This apparent difference in timing is simply a question of when these terms were introduced to refer to an existing reality, that is, the state of the arhat. This question does not in any way challenge the truth or historicity of arhathood.

14.5.2 Definition of the 6-knowledge arhat

14.5.2.1 According to the suttas, the 6-knowledge arhat (*cha-l-abhiñña arahata*) has attained, with calm (*samatha*) as basis, the 4 form dhyanas or more.⁶⁹⁸ The 6 knowledges are:⁶⁹⁹

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| (1) psychic powers; | <i>iddhi, vidhā</i> |
| (2) the divine ear (clairaudience); | <i>dibba, sota</i> |
| (3) mind-reading (telepathy); | <i>paracitta, vijānana, ñāṇa</i> |
| (4) the recollection of past lives (retro-cognition); | <i>pubbe, nivāsānussati, ñāṇa</i> |
| (5) the divine eye (clairvoyance); | <i>dibba, cakkhu</i> |
| (6) the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes (that ends suffering and rebirth). | <i>āsava-k, khaya, ñāṇa</i> ⁷⁰⁰ |

14.5.2.2 The terms *iddhi, vidhā* refers to “various psychic wonders” such as self-multiplication, going through solid objects (demolecularization), teleportation, telekinesis, astral travel and so on. The more general term *iddhi* refers to clairaudience and telepathy.

14.5.2.3 Such powers seem impossible today mainly because not many of us are able to actually master the dhyanas as taught by the Buddha. Furthermore, various imaginative claims to such powers have been made by mentalists, charlatans and professionals so that we are made wary and guarded to believe in them. However, what are naturally cultivated by deep mental powers of meditation are today (and tomorrow) increasingly seen as daily “miracles” in terms of flying in aircrafts and space travel, speaking and listening over vast distances by way of radio, TV, the computer and the internet.

15 Conclusion

15.1 PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

15.1.1 Buddhism is a path. A path means map, movement and destination—in which we need to be trained. Moral training (*sīla, sikkhā*) is like knowing the map and the territory so that our journey is safe and pleasant.

Concentration training (*samādhi, sikkhā*) is like our actions and the journey we make: we have to be focused to know where we are heading, and ensure safety on the road. We need to avoid distractions along the way. Then, our journey is proper and pleasant.

15.1.2 As long as we keep the destination clearly and constantly in mind, we will keep going. This is a path *to* nirvana, but it is also a path *of* awakening. Without the path, there is no goal: the goal is simply the path travelled, more or less.

As we journey, we see the landscape changing; we meet different kinds of people; we are faced with adventures and challenges. One enduring thing we learn on the path is that whatever we experience—the good, the bad, the adventurous, the dangerous—are all fleeting, and the scenery and the climate keep changing. We must learn and adapt as we move along, but we are always nearer our destination.

⁶⁹⁸ **Saṅgīti S** (D 33,1.10(58)/3:281); **Ākaṅkheyya S** (M 6,14-19/1:34), SD 59.1; **Paṃsu, dhovaka S** (A 3.100a,4.2-10/1:254-256), SD 19.11; **Nimitta S** (A 3.100b,14.2-20/1:258), SD 19.12, (**Nivarāṇa**) **Upakkilesa S** (A 5.23/3:17-19), SD 74.3, (**Chakka**) **Ahuneyya S** (A 6.2/3:280 f), **Pabbateyya Gāvi S** (A 9.35/4:421 f), SD 24.3.

⁶⁹⁹ For details of these powers, see **Miracles**, SD 27.5a esp (5).

⁷⁰⁰ **Saṅgīti S** (D 34,1.7(10)/3:281).

15.2 DANGERS ON THE PATH

15.2.1 One of the greatest dangers we face on the path is that of losing the way. The eightfold path is a well-beaten road. It is safe and leads directly to the ancient city of Nirvana, the abode of liberated saints. But the journey can be long and arduous, especially when we have not properly prepared for it.

We need to understand that our minds and moods—like the weather—changes, often unpredictably. But if we are sharp in reading the signs and terrain, we are better prepared by being properly dressed and bringing enough supplies and medicine. When the weather is bad, or when it is not safe to travel, we know friendly resorts or, at least, safe passages away from dangers.

15.2.2 Despite our best efforts, the path is always attended by distractions along the way. There are the omnipresent **fun-fairs** that entice us with respite and pleasure. But such places are neither *fun* nor *fair*. The fun is passing and exorbitant, but consumes our time, slowing our journey, even forgetting about it altogether. There's nothing *fair* about them, as they have only one purpose: to distract us from our journey and rob us of all our goods. As long as we keep to our path, we are safe in the company and kindness of fellow-travellers heading the same way.⁷⁰¹

15.2.3 There are those grand highways zooming with great vehicles and large crowds, charming and cacophonous. They lead to promises of pleasures and paradises. But a crowd neither knows nor looks where it is going: one simply follows the one in front. Even with eyes, we can be blind in a crowd. It is best for us to keep to the safe path, even if it appears narrow or grown over. In **the Cakka-vatti Sīha, nāda Sutta** (D 26), the Buddha admonishes us not to stray away from the path and pastures of the ancients (the noble saints):

Keep to the pasture, bhikkhus, the haunt of our ancestors [the range of our fathers].⁷⁰²
 Keeping to your pastures, the haunt of our ancestors,
 Māra will not find access to you [not descend upon you], Māra will not find you as an
 object of his consciousness. (D 26,1.3), SD 36.10

15.2.4 We will meet a colourful variety of spivs along the way. In their loud brazen tone, they propose how we can travel lighter and faster, warning us with fearful dangers ahead and their opportune intercession. They try to befriend us, but they are no friends at all. They simply want to catch us off our guard and loot all that we have, or even shanghai us away into slavery or worse. We should neither heed nor haggle with such strangers but remain with our true friends on the path.⁷⁰³

15.2.5 Having said all this, there are still those who have not even taken the first step to approach the path. They are still trapped within the walls of the houses and havens of work and play. Theirs are lives of many things, with which they identify. To leave all this behind is to abandon the selves they have built up. After all, these things have served them well, granting whatever they need or want. To them, the travellers' tales only cast doubts that they would ever enjoy any journey on the path.

15.3 THE PATH AND THE ANCIENT CITY

15.3.1 Throughout history, we have been building houses, villages, towns and cities. The more imaginative and maverick even speak of a “new society” so that we can leave the crowd and cackle of

⁷⁰¹ See Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, Singapore, 2002, 2013: §5.10a: <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/piya-tans-books/books-by-piya-tan>.

⁷⁰² *Go, care bhikkhave, caratha sake pettike visaye*. Here the Buddha is adapting brahminical language, referring to the 4 focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), “Do not stray away from the focuses of mindfulness, the way of the Buddhas.” *Pettika* means “departed ones,” but here refers to the past Buddhas. Comy (DA 3:847) quotes **Sakuṇagghi S** (S 47.6), on the fable of how a quail who strays from her customary terrain can be caught by a hawk, but not so if she does not (S 47.6/5:146 f), SD 81.2; see also **Sakuṇagghi J** (J 168/2:58 f); cf Miln 367 f.

⁷⁰³ On the parable of the two caravan guides, see **Pāyāsi S** (D 23,23) SD 39.4.

the tatty houses, villages, towns and cities for the spacious and peaceful new society. The first truth we should accept is that no one in history has ever succeeded in building such an ideal society. The point is clear enough: such an effort, if it benefits a few and leaves out the majority, would simply be selfish.

Those who have claimed to start a new society have only sublimated their own lust, hate and delusion on a grander scale, dictating their society members to mirror them and slave for them, body and mind. This is often merely a guru's dream of being that fat ravenous spider at the very centre of the web it has woven to trap the free flying fragile insects and butterflies onto its sticky net of dogma and deceit.

15.3.2 The “new society” is not a place but a new attitude that we carefully and diligently cultivate through self-understanding. This is what actually happens on the eightfold path: it is a way of self-training. We first work to understand our actions and speech, and to refine them to reflect our latent noble qualities.

When we have refined, or at least tamed, both body and speech with true nobleness (*ariyattā*),⁷⁰⁴ we are ready to tame and refine our mind and mental energies. With a morally healthy body and spiritually healthy mind, we are ready to train ourself in liberating wisdom. This “new society” is just a name for the ancient city which we must build within ourself.

15.3.3 As this ancient city of goodness, beauty and peace rises within us, we begin to notice that the space around us, too, being transformed into a space of goodness, beauty and peace. This is the space that truly embraces others with love, kindness, joy and peace. It is easy to embrace others, too, because they, too, can see for themselves what is good for them. The closing words of the remarkable parable of the ancient city, then, makes very good sense:

“While I was wandering in a forest on a mountain-side, I saw an ancient road, an ancient highway [a straight, direct way], followed by people in the past.

I followed it, and following it, I saw an ancient city, an ancient royal city, inhabited by people, endowed with parks, endowed with forests, endowed with lotus ponds and surrounded with ramparts—delightful.

Would you, sir, please renovate that city.” S12.65,20 (SD 14.2) [1.4.1.5]

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